

Annual Report, Resolutions and Papers

General Assembly 2007

© The United Reformed Church, 2007

Published by
The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

All rights reserved. This material may be used freely within the Churches.
No part of this publication may be reproduced outside the Church in any form
or by any means – graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording, taping or information storage and retrieval systems –
without the prior permission in writing of the publishers.

The publishers make no representation, express or implied, with regard to the
accuracy of the information contained in this book and cannot accept any legal
responsibility for any errors or omissions that may take place.

Designed & Printed by the Graphics office in Communications on behalf of the
Assembly Arrangements Committee, The United Reformed Church,
Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

Images supplied by churches within the United Reformed Church for the sole
purpose of General Assembly 2007 are not to be used without written permission
for any other purpose.

Produced with reference to "See it Right: Making information accessible to
people with sight problems" (2006), Royal National Institute of the Blind, London.
ISBN 1 85878 704 1

Printed on 80gsm White Bond paper sourced from sustainable forests,
Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF)

Plastic bindings (Laurel) made from natural products in a procedure that
guarantees almost waste-free production. Colour granules are free of cadmium
and all other harmful substances.

Supplied direct from manufacturer to reduce carbon footprint.

Printed on RISO RP3700 Digital Printer: low electricity consumption/low heat output.
RISO Inks: Soy-Bean based oil - primarily organic based and from a sustainable
source. Sample batches of RISO products have shown a 100% recycle rate
(IT equipment target, WEEE directive).

Contents

General Assembly 2007

Catch the Vision	7
A new Department of Mission	13
The Moderator of General Assembly	23
Synod Moderators' Report	25
 Synod Resolutions and Reports	
– South Western Resolution	29
– Yorkshire	31
– Eastern	35
– Thames North	37
– East Midlands	171
 Church Changes	39
 Mission Council Report	45
 Mission Council Resolutions	57
 <i>Document 6 – Grants and Loans Group</i>	77
 Governing Document	79
 Changes to Basis and Structure	85
 Changes to Rules of procedure	95
 Nominations	99
 New Committee Structures	111
 Finance	113
 <i>Document 7 – Revised remit for the Finance Committee</i>	115
 Pastoral Reference	117
 Church & Society	119
 Address to the Throne	121
 Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry	123
Multicultural flier	127
bme skills audit	129
 Ecumenical	131
 Doctrine, Prayer and Worship	135
Consultation on Eldership	137
The Nature of the URC's Ecumenical Engagement	141
 Inter Faith Relations	145
 Life & Witness	147
Covenant Membership and Mission	151
 Ministries Sub-Committees	
– Accreditation	157
– Lay Preaching	159
– Transfer age limit	161
– Plan for Partnership	161
– Assessment procedure	163
 Commitment for Life	169

Separate documentation

Document 1 – Heritage Lottery Fund

Document 2 – Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality

Document 3 – Global Warming/Climate Change

Section O Papers:

Document 4 – Section O:

 Replacement of existing Part II

Document 5 – Ministerial Incapacity

 Procedure Part II

Consensus Decision Making for the
United Reformed Church

Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2006

Information Papers

List of Resolutions

Name	No.	Committee	page
'Think-tank' on mission and spirituality	1	CTV	12
A new Department of Mission	2	CTV	21
A new Department of Mission	3	CTV	21
A new Department of Mission	4	CTV	21
Election of Moderators	5	CTV	23
Retired Ministers' Housing Society Fund	6	RMHS	29
Retired Ministers' Housing Guidelines	7	RMHS	29
Church Closures	8		39
Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O): Ratification of Replacement of existing Part 1	9	Mission Council	57
Section O: Ratification of amendments to the Structure	10	Mission Council	59
Section O: Replacement of existing Part II	11	Mission Council	61
Ministerial Incapacity Procedure	12	Mission Council	61
Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II	13	Mission Council	63
Ministerial Incapacity Procedure: Changes to the Structure	14	Mission Council	63
Ministerial Incapacity Procedure: Church Related Community Workers	15	Mission Council	64
Changes to Section O Part 1	16	Mission Council	65
Changes to Section O Part 1	17	Mission Council	68
Changes to the Basis of Union to include CRCWs in the ministerial disciplinary process	18	Mission Council	70
Amendment of Structure to include CRCWs in the ministerial disciplinary process	19	Mission Council	72
Ratification of the Listed Buildings Appeals Procedure	20	Mission Council	75
Changes to the rules of procedure on Appeals (Listed Buildings)	21	Mission Council	76
Revised Arrangements for nominating directors of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund	22	Mission Council	76
Governing Body	23		83
Changes to the Basis and Structure	24	CTV	85
Changes to Rules of Procedure	25	CTV	95
Appointment of the Moderator for Yorkshire Synod	26	Nominations	109
Appointment of the Moderator for North Western Synod	27	Nominations	109
Nominations	28	Nominations	109
Trustee's Report and Annual Accounts	29	Finance	114
Appointment of Auditors	30	Finance	114
The giving of the members of the Church to central funds	31	Finance	114
Revised remit of the Finance Committee – <i>Document 7</i>	32	Mission Council	116
Pastoral Reference Committee	33	Pastoral Reference	118
Representation at General Assembly	34	RJMM	124
Anniversary of the abolition of the British Slave Trade	35	RJMM	125
Ecumenical Engagement	36	Ecumenical	133
Covenant Membership and Mission	37	Life and Witness	156

List of Resolutions *...continued*

Name	No.	Committee	page
Upper Age limit for transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service	38	Ministries Sub-Committee	161
Amendments to the Plan for Partnership	39	Ministries Sub-Committee	161
The Assessment procedure from July 2007	40	Ministries Sub-Committee	163
Heritage Lottery Funding – Document 1	41	Mission Council	(Doc. 1) 8
Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality – Document 2	42	Mission Council	(Doc. 2) 12
Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality – Document 2	43	Mission Council	(Doc. 2) 12
Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality – Document 2	44	Mission Council	(Doc. 2) 12
Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality – Document 2	45	Mission Council	(Doc. 2) 12
Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality – Document 2	46	Mission Council	(Doc. 2) 12
Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality – Document 2	47	Mission Council	(Doc. 2) 12
Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality – Document 2	48	Mission Council	(Doc. 2) 12
Climate Change – Document 3	49	Mission Council	(Doc. 3) 2
Consensus Decision Making	50	Mission Council	extra paper
Assisted Dying	51	Church & Society	167

'God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference' – that is how the church has heard the Catch the Vision strapline. Those of us who have had the privilege of steering the process would say that every part of that phrase is equally significant.

God's people...

Thanks to the grace of God, and not because we are in any way special, God has called us into a new way of living in Jesus Christ. The One who fashioned the dance of sub-atomic particles out of the love of the Trinity, and flung galaxies across distances we can barely calculate, has called us by name. And the gentle tenderness of that calling tells us that we are at home, this perplexingly beautiful creation is ours, and that every human being is a brother or sister who reflects God's wonder and glory. The God who is 'immortal, invisible, in light inaccessible' also broke bread one night when Judas slipped into the darkness, was left desolate and broken on Jerusalem's rubbish heap the following afternoon when all but the women melted away, and on the Sunday rose with a power as great as creation itself. The world could never be the same, and that is why we are here, for we are part of that.

Transformed by the gospel

The church tells the story of that transforming gospel, year in year out, through the cycle of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. We sometimes think we convert people – we don't, we tell the story. Conversion is God's business. We sometimes think we extend the kingdom – we don't, only God does. We are there to create God shaped gaps in time and space, opportunities for God's story to cut across the world's stories. So we continue the work of the prophets and priests of old, as story tellers and repeaters of the history, and the miracle is the faithfulness of our God who comes through the Word and our words, through his broken bread and our broken lives.

a) A process and a programme

In line with Catch the Vision's timetable, this year our minds have turned to spirituality and mission. We hope and pray for the renewal of the church by the grace of God. The church often suffers from a 'pack' mentality – five booklets and a DVD and we've 'done' spirituality, six Wednesday evenings in the church hall and we are evangelists. Resources can help, but what is needed is orientation towards God, prayerful waiting, and the gift of renewal for the next phase of the church's life.

We have done the preparation. We've adjusted our structures, marshalled our resources, made institutional alterations (like increasing the number of special category ministry posts so we can explore new ways of being church), and now we need to offer ourselves anew to the God of surprises.

This is not about a quick fix but a continuous process. We have been deeply conscious of both the variety of spiritualities in the United Reformed Church, and of the fine work of many congregations. We will be offering a programme which congregations can use in their own contexts to begin the process of re-engaging with the Bible, prayer and evangelism. We owe deep gratitude to Dr John Campbell who is leading this work. There will be more to share at Assembly. We hope promotional materials will be available for the autumn Synods, and that the programme will run in the spring/early summer of 2008.

b) Worship

Over the past year many people have talked to us about worship. Worship is for many the main way in which we are 'transformed by the gospel'. We believe that worship is the central experience moulding Reformed spirituality. We have heard heartening stories of vibrant, dynamic worship from all parts of the theological spectrum, but we have also heard of frustrations and difficulties, and of worship which seems badly prepared and inadequately led. That perturbs us, for worship should be the place where, through the sacramental power of bread, wine and Word, God encounters the people of God. A bad experience of worship does not encourage a visitor to return.

We understand the difficulties – ever larger pastorates, fewer lay preachers, the resources needed to produce worship teams in local churches and the increasing demands on our ministers. For all that, we still wonder what priority we give to worship compared with pastoral care, community building, political campaigning, and much else. Waiting on God in worship is the most important activity of human life. To it we bring the best we can bring, in word, music, art, attention and anticipation. It would be wonderful if the United Reformed Church were known simply for the quality of its worship. As 'Catch the Vision' moves into its next phase, we plead that the church turns its mind to the quality of its worship.

Making a difference

It's a Thursday in late March and Southwark Cathedral in the Spring sun has every seat taken. But this congregation is unusual. It is full of young people; and a fine ensemble of young musicians are making music that fills the church. Others are in animated conversation, but soundlessly because they are signing. The congregation settles and worship begins. There is drama, choral music, a signing choir of disabled deaf young people, a profoundly simple sermon from the Archbishop of Canterbury and prayers from the Moderator of Southern Synod, Lord Carey and the chaplain of Caterham School.

This extraordinary event was a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the birth of a Congregational minister. Two very different institutions, the Royal School for Deaf Children in Margate and Caterham School, were celebrating John Townsend their founder. The Royal School has been a lodestar in the development of education for deaf people and now finds itself working with disabled deaf people. The quality of that care was readily apparent as staff enabled the young people to participate fully in the service. Caterham is a leading independent school.

They are what history, particularly state intervention in education, has made them. Their founder, nearly 200 years ago, was minister of Jamaica Row Chapel in Bermondsey, east London. His congregation included Mr and Mrs Creasy, whose son James was deaf. Because they were wealthy, James was taught privately by a famed deaf educator. The plight of poor deaf children troubled Mrs Creasy, so she raised it with her minister. Townsend set about researching the problem, discovered its considerable scope, and then began energetically networking across the evangelical world, enlisting the support of MPs like William Wilberforce and bankers like Henry Thornton. Within five months the Bermondsey Asylum for the Support and Education of Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor opened its doors in 1792, with six pupils. It was to thrive, and in 1807 gained royal patronage.

By 1811 Townsend was a figure in London Congregationalism, having added Orange Street Chapel near Leicester Square to his ministry in Bermondsey. Although his stipend allowed him to live in comfort and charitable benevolence, he was painfully aware of the plight of his lower paid colleagues, and dreamt of a school for their children (there was no state provision). In October that year the first Congregational school began in

Catch the Vision

Newington, at a rate of 25 guineas per child with 'washing, pens and ink included'. It moved to Lewisham in 1814, and to Caterham in 1883. Meanwhile Townsend preached, presided at the sacraments, raised funds, and played a part in founding what became the London Missionary Society in 1795 and the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804.

Within a generation it was easy to mock such philanthropy, because goodness often walks hand in hand with hypocrisy, as Dickens and others showed. That is to miss the point that Townsend was a man called by God, living under the discipline of the gospel, who made the world a better place. He did that by responding to needs. Thanks to his legacy, thousands of deaf people have received proper education, and thousands of pupils have benefited from the Christian ethos that remains central to Caterham's vision. And that is before LMS/CWM and the Bible Society are taken into account. He was not unusual – this is a story that could be replicated across our three nations.

Fast forward to the church of 2007....

Ours is a different world to the one John Townsend knew, not least because the state has responsibility for much which in his day was either done by philanthropists or left undone.

Each year the Congregational and General Insurance Company funds community awards, which support innovative, cutting edge work in local churches. This year the finalists included an experimental café church in Colchester reaching 200 people on Sunday afternoons, a drop-in centre for young people at New Mills, and an ecumenical youth church in Tadley, run largely by young people themselves. And they are the tip of a huge ice-berg. God's people continue to make a difference.

But, we live in a culture that is obsessed by what is quantifiable. Fortunately, God has never shared that outlook. In God's economy, mustard seeds have enormous potential and mountains move, widow's mites finance revolution, while five loaves and two fish feed a great crowd. John Townsend's concern grew two schools that have ridden the waves of change for nearly 200 years. God's way of working is alive and well in New Mills, Colchester, Tadley and many other places when needs are perceived, an offering of service is made and Jesus is set free in word and deed. Let us keep church statistics and finance in their place so we can give priority to creating windows for the kingdom.

God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference.

An immense amount of work has been undertaken this year by many people to implement the decisions taken by Assembly in 2005 and 2006. Some of that work is reported in the following sections:

Changes to the Basis and Structure proposal (pages 85-93) details a way in which the church can proceed with the conciliar changes it agreed in 2005 and ratified in 2006. If we follow this route, we will avoid the expense of procuring a Statutory Instrument to alter the United Reformed Church Act by Parliament. The solution, we freely admit, is pragmatic, but the advantage of pragmatism is that it works! The Steering Group would like to express their thanks to the Clerk, the Legal Advisor and the Revd Dr David Thompson for their work.

A New Department of Mission (pages 13-21) sets out the detailed plan for changing our committee structure to create one Department of Mission, as promised at last year's Assembly.

The Moderator of General Assembly (page 23), sets out proposals about the ways in which we should elect the Moderator of General Assembly in line with the decision to adopt a pattern of biennial Assemblies. The creation of the Trustee Body (pages 79-83) sets out the Governing Document for the Trustees.

In our 2005 report we noted that there was no coherent business case for moving Church House out of London (paras 107-9) and that we would begin discussions with the Methodist Church about sharing premises, '...not to produce short-term savings (although it will probably produce long-term reductions in costs) but to foster ecumenical working and creativity.' Last year we reported that those conversations were continuing.

They have taken a significant leap forward recently, with a professional feasibility study being undertaken to see if we could move the United Reformed Church's operations into the Methodist building in Marylebone Road. This is work in progress but we feel it right to talk about it now. Voices in past Assemblies have urged the national offices of the denominations to 'get their acts together' and mirror the joint working which happens at local level. The Methodist Church is also engaged in re-structuring and although we both accept for differing reasons that this is not the time for unity we can do what a Methodist colleague called 'parallel walking'. This may be a window of opportunity which will not return for at least a generation. The Steering Group have assumed that the church will encourage these conversations. Discussions will continue and a report will be brought to Mission Council and Assembly in the normal way.

An ending and a beginning...

It is time to take stock of Catch the Vision. We set out in 2004, fired with idealism plus a good deal of realism, to set a new course for the United Reformed Church. We knew that this was more like manoeuvring an oil tanker than tacking in a yacht. That makes the achievements of the last three years all the more remarkable.

What have we achieved?

- A new focus on mission: the proposals for a Mission Department and Committee are before you, offering the opportunity of a radical re-focusing.
- The beginnings of a new focus on the Bible, evangelism and spirituality, which will have taken shape by Assembly.
- The machinery to respond to new ways of being church by creating more Special Category Ministry opportunities.
- A slimmer, fitter body: the reduction of conciliar layers offers a real saving of time, less bureaucracy and a more locally sensitive structure for mission.
- More efficient governance: the creation of a governance structure appropriate to an organisation our size, and in keeping with the demands of the Charities Act.
- Improved stewardship of time and resources: giving is rising and central costs are reducing.
- A shift of the locus of decision making, away from national committees towards local churches and their Synods.
- Enhanced ecumenical engagement with the Methodist Church through the National Pastoral Strategy; with the Church of England through new discussions based around God's reign and our unity; and with the Roman Catholic Church through bi-lateral dialogue.
- The encouragement of an independent Regeneration Agency to work with local churches.

That adds up to the most dramatic and far-reaching period of re-visioning in thirty years. It has been achieved in three years. It proves that we are eager to embrace God's future.

Catch the Vision

We have now reached a critical turning point in Catch the Vision as we turn our hearts and minds to the work that God has for us in the next decades. As a Steering Group we are deeply conscious of the trust the church has placed in us, and grateful for the opportunities we have been given. However, we have always argued that the regeneration of the church and a new concentration on mission and spirituality are long-term matters. We believe that by the end of this Assembly we will have the structures to allow that concentration.

We suggest one further way in which that focus could be enhanced, and 'Catch the Vision' taken forward. Spirituality and mission are not there to be managed for they don't work in that way. Rather, we need space for dreaming dreams and seeing visions. Prophets, people of prayer, and those who work at the edge are rarely comfortable with the structures and confines of institutional life. We need a 'think-tank' which can see God's blue sky beyond the church's red tape, so we offer you our dream.

We envisage a group of 15-20 people, meeting at least twice a year for 24 hours at Windermere (maybe at the end of July and the following April), to turn their minds to the on-going renewal and spiritual refreshment of the church. There would be a mix of theologians and Biblical scholars and practitioners, both lay and ordained, representing the theological and cultural diversity of the church, along with ecumenical participants. It would be serviced by the Central Secretariat and convened by the Moderator.

We suggest it should initially be selected by the Moderator, in consultation with the Nominations Committee. Members would serve for a period of three years, with a third of the membership changing each year.

Any papers, projects or programmes suggested by the group would then go to Mission Council, or the appropriate committee or department, for further consideration and development. The intent would be to keep a freshness of vision at the heart of our structures, and to enable sensitive response to the shifting spiritual and theological environment in which the church finds itself.

The Reformers argued that the church is always in a process of change, of growing into Christ – 'ecclesia semper reformanda' – but for all that, change is uncomfortable and disconcerting. That has made the willingness of many in the church to work with us all the more moving, and we offer our profound thanks to those who have shouldered large burdens on our behalf. The kind of work which we have done in the past three years needs to be guided by a small group. The kind of work which we are about to do as we enter into the process of working together on the Bible, spirituality and evangelism needs a different kind of leadership, as we catch a vision of God's tomorrow in each of our churches. We therefore ask Assembly to demit us from our task.



RESOLUTION 1

'Think-tank' on mission and spirituality

General Assembly instructs Mission Council and the Nominations Committee to do such further work as is necessary to create a 'think-tank' on mission and spirituality.

A new Department of Mission

General Assembly 2007

1. Overview

1.1 General Assembly 2006 proposed that the central operation of the church should be restructured into three departments – Ministries of the Church, Administration and Resources, and Mission Policy and Theology – with the request that a more detailed proposal be brought to the 2007 Assembly. Mission Council agreed in March 2007 to simplify the name to ‘Department of Mission’. This appendix sets that proposal within the wider context of ‘Catch the Vision.’

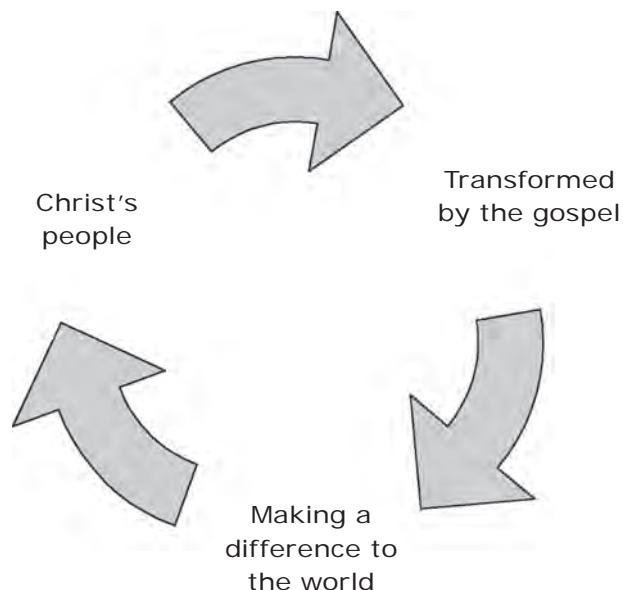


Figure 1 – Catching the Vision

1.2 The United Reformed Church, along with other UK churches, has been experiencing significant decline. Between 1979 and the 2005 the proportion of the population attending church has almost halved (Brierley, 2006¹), and the membership of the United Reformed Church has matched that exactly. CTV was launched in 2002, as a major review of our life, seeking to address decline by reshaping the church and giving it a fresh sense of purpose.

1.3 As presented in figure 1, it recalls the church to the dynamics of discipleship. We are Christ's people. Week by week as we worship we are changed by the gospel, and through the power of the Spirit our lives 'make a difference' to the world. It is important that we don't get stuck in any one part of that cycle, because discipleship is about the whole. Spirituality cannot be divorced from activity, nor should learning be sundered from doing. They belong together, and it is by being caught up in that on-going dance that we grow in Christ.

1 Peter Brierley, *Religious Trends 6*

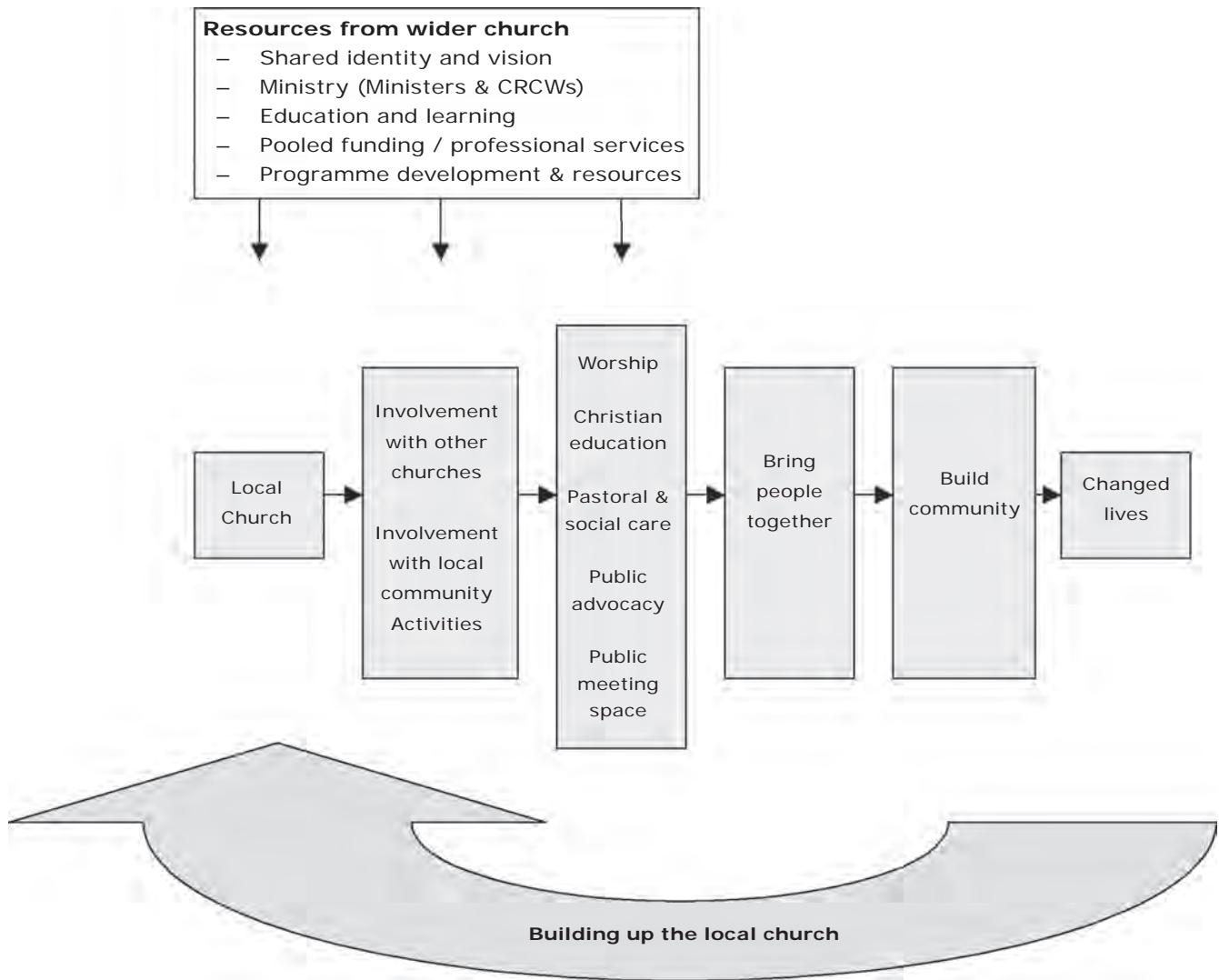


Figure 2 – Building up the local church

1.4 That cycle describes what should be happening in each of our local congregations. One significant question that the church must answer is how the resources of the wider church, the Synods and the Assembly, can contribute most usefully to that cycle. Theoretical models can never capture the intricacy of reality, but in figure 2 we offer one picture of how that might happen.

1.5 Looking first at the upper part of the model, Assembly agreed last year that its work should be organised in three broad areas or departments. As figure 3 shows, there are clear overlaps between those areas, so there need to be bridges that join them. We envisage those bridges having different forms. Some will be people – for example, the conveners or secretaries meeting across boundaries; others will be ‘institutional’ – for example, joint working groups on particular initiations; yet others will be interest based, for example, a network for those interested in mission with children. We need to take care that those bridges are built.

A new Department of Mission

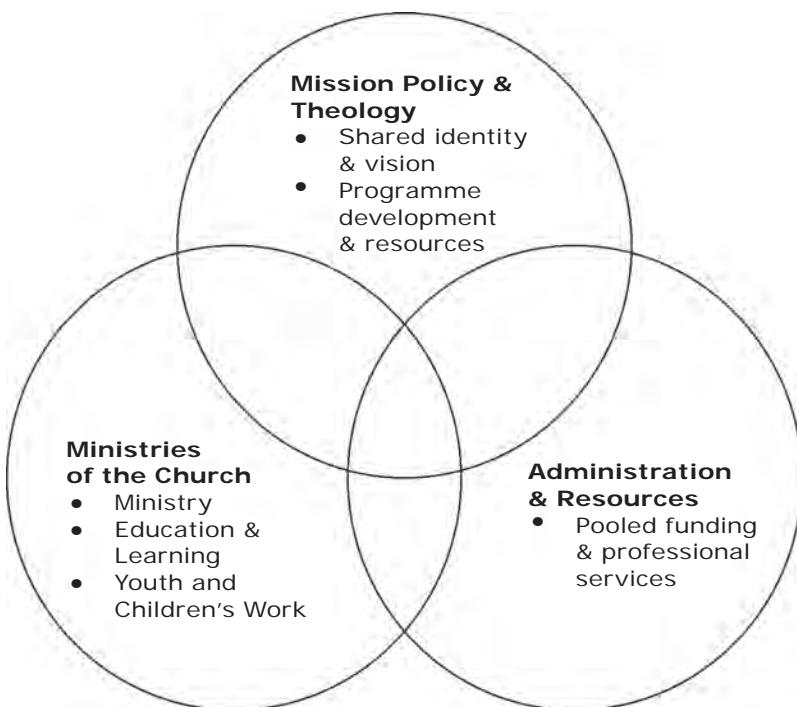


Figure 3 – Central resources of the church



1.6 If bridges between departments are important, so too is an awareness that the central and the local need each other, that as Paul said, we are together part of the same body. (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). We all have a role to play and we all need each other to function effectively. Whilst that is obvious in some parts of church life – for example the payment of ministers – it is less obvious in others, like mission. Figure 4 offers a model, and it offers a challenge to the new Department and its committee. How can each inform the other for the building up of the whole?

Figure 4 – Local/central dynamic relationship

1.7 Mission happens as God's people live in the world, sharing the mission of God, making a difference. That experience needs to inform central priorities, and central priorities (gleaned from the overview of many local situations and from other parts of God's church) need to contribute to the shaping of local church life and witness, and the building up of the whole church.

2. Purpose, priorities and performance

2.1 The central task of the Mission Department is to focus on mission, working with the whole church to formulate and give expression to our mission and faith in ways which bring alive our vision of 'being Christ's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference to the world'.

2.2 Whilst the department will bring together existing work on ecumenical relations, interfaith relations, racial justice & multicultural ministry, public affairs (church & society), international relations (*Belonging to the World Church*), *Commitment for Life*, doctrine (faith & order), prayer and worship, and mission it should take seriously the challenge expressed in 3.1 and organise its work around this focus.

2.3 In the transitional phase from Assembly 2007 to Assembly 2008 the Department should develop programme proposals for consideration and adoption at the 2008 Assembly which express our vision in terms of the Five Marks of Mission. This should be based on existing work, but not limited by it. If any existing work does not fit this framework, then the proposal should be to abandon it. If there are serious omissions, then there should be a proposal for how they will be dealt with. The emphasis should be on doing a few things well, focussing our energy to best effect.

	Being Christ's people (Community/Building up the church)	Transformed by the gospel (Learning)	Making a difference to the world (Actions leading to changed lives)
To proclaim the good news of the kingdom			
To teach, baptise and nurture new believers			
To respond to human need by loving service			
To seek to transform the unjust structures of society			
To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth			

Table 1 – A framework for mission priorities

2.4 Significantly, whilst the Mission Department might lead in developing these proposals, cross boundary working with the other Departments will be critical to its success. Those links will need to be established in the transitional phase.

A new Department of Mission

2.5 Once adopted, the proposals should become the basis for evaluating the performance of the department and the church's work. If we are serious about 'making a difference' we need to reflect on what we have done, learn from experience and where necessary make changes. It is no longer an option to launch a programme with good intent and just let it take its course. If we expect a programme to make a difference, then we must monitor it critically as a means of supporting and encouraging its success.

2.6 At present the only things which we measure in the United Reformed Church are money and membership/attendance figures. They tell us something about our organisational health, but give little clue as to whether we are having any impact in our mission (whether we are 'making a difference'). Church growth or decline is an important pointer (and should not be under-estimated in its significance), but it is a pale reflection of all that we might count as our contribution to God's mission. The Mission Department and the other departments, in the light of *Catch the Vision* should give serious consideration to identifying how else we might measure our achievements. Doing that cogently and consistently could play a significant role in contributing to our sense of purpose and self-confidence.

3. Governance and management

3.1 The Mission Department will be responsible to a new Mission Committee, which will be representative of the Synods, thus ensuring a direct link between the work of local churches in their Synods and the work of the Assembly. That committee in its turn will be responsible to Assembly.

3.2 The committee and the Department will therefore contribute to the life and work of the church through Mission Council and Assembly. Our hope is that we will discover ways in which we can bring together our experience of the church locally, regionally, nationally and internationally (Christ's people), and that through its councils the United Reformed Church will read the signs of the times, reflect on them in the light of God's word (open ourselves to be transformed by the gospel), so that we can make a difference in our congregations, to the communities we minister with and to, and to the world. Then working through various networks (mission enablers, racial justice advocates, *Commitment for life* advocates, global partner coordinators, ecumenical officers, etc) the Mission Department will seek to give effect to the policies and programme (action) priorities which the church has determined. We hope the Mission Department, through dynamic interaction with the life of the church at every level, will have a role in assisting the councils of the church to reflect on mission and theology.

4. Operations

4.1 The Mission Department will be responsible to, and overseen by, the Mission Committee. The executive staff team will be coordinated by the General Secretary and will comprise (initially) the following posts:

- Secretary for Mission (exact title & job description still to be finalised)
- Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order
- Secretary for Church & Society
- Secretary for Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry
- International Relations Programme Officer (exact title & job description still to be finalised)
- *Commitment for Life* Co-ordinator.

4.2 They will be supported by four administrative staff who between them will ensure the smooth running of the Mission Department office.

4.3 This new staffing configuration has been arrived at by ending the posts of Secretary for Life & Witness and Secretary for International Relations and re-designating the International Relations Programme Officer post as an executive position. The support staff numbers have been reduced by one through eliminating a vacant position and increasing the hours of some of the remaining staff who previously worked part-time, effecting an overall saving.

4.4 The executive staff team will meet regularly (initially fortnightly or even weekly and later, approximately every 4 weeks) to coordinate their activities and to avoid unnecessary duplication of work. Together, under the leadership of the General Secretary, they will determine how the work allocated to them by the Committee is taken forward and reported back and be responsible for the operational effectiveness of the Mission department.

4.5 Their principle working method will be through **synod and locally-based networks** to ensure continual local/central feedback, and allow the experience of the local church to inform the priorities of the Mission Committee. As of now these networks are:

- Mission Enablers
- Ecumenical Officers
- *Commitment for Life* Advocates
- Church & Society network
- URC Peace Fellowship
- Creation Challenge (URC/Methodist environmental network)
- Health & Healing network
- Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry Advocates/Coordinators
- Minority Ethnic Conferences
- Ethnic Minority Lay & ordained Ministers' Association
- *Belonging to the World Church* Advocates
- European Partnership Coordinators
- Global Partner Coordinators
- Inter Faith Relations Advocates
- Silence & Retreats network
- Synod Rural Link People
- Community Mission & Ministry network.

4.6 With greater emphasis being placed on networking some initial work will be required to clarify their purpose, the roles of those who serve in them, and the way they are managed and led. As is presently the case there will need to be some asymmetry in their design, for what works for one synod may not work for another and what is appropriate for one network may be ill-suited to others. Accordingly, as networks assume greater significance there should be an ongoing dialogue with synods and Communications on how they could be developed to best effect. By the same token there should be a review of networks in the light of the emerging priorities, considering what networks, working in what ways might best help us to implement them.

4.7 The emphasis on networks and consulting is a deliberate attempt to build a more dynamic relationship between the Assembly operation and local church life, giving new meaning and a fresh sense of purpose to our self-understanding as a conciliar church.

4.8 In addition to the new committee and the networks, two standing groups will remain:

- The *Commitment for Life* committee (which is substantially based on the *Commitment for Life* advocates network) to oversee this independently funded programme of the church; and
- The Advisory Group on Faith and Order (effectively a network of theologians who advise the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order on United Reformed Church doctrine and polity when such clarifications are called for).

A new Department of Mission

5. Budget

5.1 The initial Mission Department budget (excluding *Commitment for Life*) with comparative figures for 2006 and 2007 is set out below. It is based on the 2007 budget figures of the constituent parts and assumes no reduction on those figures for 2008 and an inflationary increase for staff costs.

Mission Department	Budget		
	2006	2007	2008
Staff Costs	314,600	269,400	277,500
Staff expenses (travel, etc.)	70,500	55,400	55,400
Office Costs (other costs)	14,500	13,900	13,900
Total core costs	399,600	338,700	346,800
Committees, conferences & other costs	53,000	52,500	—
Mission Committee, networks & programmes	14,000	13,000	36,500
Mission analysis/development			20,000
<i>Belonging to the World Church</i>	90,000	90,000	90,000
Overseas partner assistance programmes	30,000	30,000	30,000
URC/Methodist National Rural Officer	27,000	30,000	30,000
Ecumenical representation	21,000	20,000	25,000
Ecumenical grants	207,870	196,500	200,500
Total programme costs	442,870	432,000	432,000
Total Combined costs	842,470	770,700	778,800

5.2 As a provisional budget, which experience of the new configuration and changing priorities might reshape, it is based on existing expenditure patterns, so that ecumenical representation and ecumenical grants (previously contained within the ecumenical budget) are increased to accommodate such expenditure by the other committees (attendance at ecumenical meetings, small grants, etc.) rather than as an expression of increased commitment or expenditure in that area. The most significant change reflects the move away from committees, which releases considerable additional funds for programme work and networks and for a new item mission analysis/development to fund mission research (what in other circles might be termed market research) as a contribution to increasing the effectiveness of our work as envisaged in section 3.

6. Ecumenical Dimension

6.1 Much of the work which constitutes the Mission Department is ecumenical in one form or another. In particular some aspects of the work are organised ecumenically:

- URC/Methodist National Rural Officer – a shared post and programme
- Joint Public Issues Team – bringing together United Reformed Church, Methodist and Baptist work on public affairs in a joint team.

There is also the Methodist-URC Liaison Committee meeting the needs of Methodist-URC congregations, and there are ongoing explorations in other areas of our life where work might be more effectively handled collaboratively between two or more churches pooling their resources. All of this will continue with the Mission Department and Mission Council encouraging it as an important contribution to the development of the United Reformed Church's life and witness.

6.2 Such collaborative working places additional resources (expertise, etc.) at our disposal, which can be to our considerable benefit. At the same time it enables us to share our particular gifts with our partners. Accordingly, we cannot plan our work in isolation. This is not a problem, as it accords with our ethos and potentially gives us greater scope to better support the significant number of our local churches which are in local ecumenical partnerships of one form or another, in line with the intention to develop a dynamic relationship between central and local priorities.

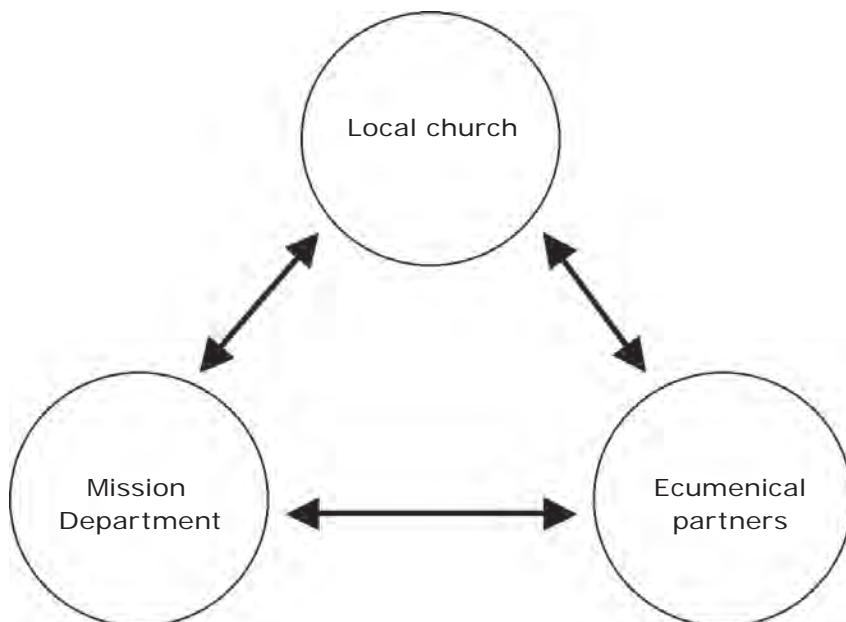


Figure 5 – Towards dynamic ecumenical relationships

6.3 As part of this approach the Mission Department should make space for regularly meeting with those who represent us on ecumenical bodies, as part of our support for their work on our behalf and to ensure that our approach to mission and theology is informed by ecumenical thought and practice.

A new Department of Mission

7. Implementation

7.1 Assuming the 2007 General Assembly agrees this or some variant of this proposal, implementation will begin following the Assembly as follows:

Transitional Period up to 2008 General Assembly

- Existing committees wind up their business, identifying specific unfinished policy work which needs to be carried forward (Mission Council will review and decide on such action as is called for).
- Committees not reporting to the 2008 Assembly will hold their final meeting before the end of December 2007.
- Committees reporting to the 2008 Assembly may continue into 2008 if necessary to finalise their Assembly report.
- The new Committee will be selected by the Nominations Committee, and come into being in the Spring of 2008.
- The current informal Mission executive staff team meeting will be formally constituted.
- Mission staff job descriptions will be amended to bring them into line with the new working arrangements.
- New working practices will be implemented in the Mission staff team to maximise the benefits of team working.
- The General Secretariat and Assembly staff team will identify crossover areas of work between the three departments and ensure that people are appropriately involved and/or informed about work which involves or is relevant to more than one department and report this to the October 2007 Mission Council.
- The new Committee and the Mission team will begin work on the prioritisation.
- The Secretary for Mission will begin work on 1st November (or as soon as possible thereafter).
- The Mission department will formally begin its existence on the 1st January 2008 (enabling a smooth budgetary transition).
- Work to develop networks in line with this proposal (paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6) including consultation with synods should be carried out during this period.

7.2 From Assembly 2008 the Mission Committee and its Department should be fully functioning and operating as envisaged. In January 2010 a review (arranged by Mission Council) should be carried out to evaluate the department's initial effectiveness and a report and recommendations brought to the 2010 Assembly, where any necessary adjustments can be made.

RESOLUTION 2

A new Department of Mission

General Assembly adopts the plan for the creation and functioning of a Mission Committee and Department.

RESOLUTION 3

A new Department of Mission

General Assembly instructs Mission Council to bring proposals for the Mission Department's work programme to the 2008 Assembly.

RESOLUTION 4

A new Department of Mission

General Assembly instructs Mission Council to arrange for a review of the working of the Mission Department in January 2010 and to report its findings and recommendations to the 2010 Assembly.



1.1 The Steering Group have undertaken a good deal of work on the role of the Moderator of General Assembly. We are grateful to the Revd Dr David Peel who has worked with us as a theological consultant on this. David presented us with a paper entitled *The Moderator of General Assembly: a theological reflection*. It drew on his own experience, discussion with past Moderators, and the experience of our British and European Reformed partners.

1.2 We recommend that we adopt a different model of leadership. We would elect a minister and elder respectively, each of whom will serve for two years. So, at any one time there would be two Moderators (one elder, one minister) operating collegially. Together with the immediate past Moderator and the Moderator Elect, and with the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary, they would form a leadership group who would meet (say) three times a year.

1.3 We believe this to be commendable for several reasons. First, it makes a two year commitment to Moderatorship manageable, because the task is shared collegially. Second, it honours our theological commitment to the complementarity of the ministries of minister and elder. Third, it will provide more stability within Assembly's leadership team, which will consist of the two serving Moderators, the Moderator Elect, the immediate past Moderator and the two General Secretaries. Fourth, that group in itself will provide a point of accountability and support for the Moderators. Fifth, it would cement the relationship between Assembly and the Trustee body, not least because of the considerable overlap of personnel.

1.4 We note that if an elder presently in employment were elected, although we could not match their salary, we might be able to provide the equivalent of a stipend as a generous honorarium for their term of office.

1.5 There will clearly need to be transitional arrangements if Assembly agrees to this proposal. 2008 will be anomalous. At the 2008 Assembly the church will need to elect an elder to work in tandem with the 08 Moderator during 09. It will also need to elect a minister and an elder to be inducted in 2010 and serve from 2010 to 2012. Should Assembly agree to these proposals, a note will be sent to Synods advising them about the details of nominations for 2008 so that the matter can receive attention at the October round of Synod meetings.

RESOLUTION 5

Election of Moderators

General Assembly resolves that as from 2008 it shall elect two Moderators at its biennial meeting, one a minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker, and one an Elder, to serve together for the following two years.



Synod Moderators' Report

General Assembly 2007

1. Although this is called a 'report' from the Moderators, it is in truth usually more of a commentary, an overview rather than an attempt at accountability. In this it is rather different from most reports in this book and maybe that is why some people say they read it first! Our primary task this year would seem to be to complement the 'Catch the Vision' steering group's report, though we have not read their final text before compiling this.

2. 2007 is the crunch year for the United Reformed Church, when we must focus most carefully and decisively on what it is that God has for us to do, on how we are to contribute to the totality of God's mission, on who we are and "for what we shall be known". This year we move beyond reacting to crisis and start deciding where we need to be in the coming decade. There have been eloquent analyses of where we are now and equally eloquent reminders of where we should be! This year we are going deeper than concerns over our structures or our resources, to move on from where we are towards where we should be as Church.

3. It is surely wise when discussing our United Reformed Church identity to concentrate more on the marks of an authentic church than on the distinctiveness of the Reformed tradition. The heart of *who we are* is not *what we aren't*. Our distinctive Reformed inheritance helps us become a 'true church' for God. That is its purpose. So it is that we derive help, for example, from the particular emphases in the splendid *Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church* provided we treat this tradition as a resource for moving on, a means to an end. This is the crucial difference between continuing a tradition and maintaining one. God has given us our own gerundive 'semper Reformanda', a Latin phrase which can be interpreted as 'always open to God's creative Spirit'. We must hope and pray that the recent years full of internal debate will help the United Reformed Church to emerge in the coming years as a more effective instrument of God's grace and God's purposes in a century when accelerating change in every area of life will increasingly feel out of control. So as Moderators we would rather talk more about God this year when concern over spirituality is bringing us all to the climax of the Catch the Vision process.

4. Yes, the United Reformed Church needs to be realistic. It was sober realism about the multiple crises facing us which launched 'Catch the Vision'. No-one who was present at Mission Council in October 2002 can forget the hammer blows of successive reports on numerical decline, adverse age profiling, financial near-collapse and a lack of candidates for our various ministries. Was this a shot across the bows or a hole below the water line? But if we are realistic as *believers* we shall always be hopeful, since as Bishop David Jenkins put it "God is; God is as God is in Jesus; therefore there is hope." Despair has no place in our discipleship nor in this report. It is not that Christian realism is optimistic; it is Christ-like realism after all. And without death of some kind there will be no resurrection of any kind. But we are called to hope because of Jesus Christ and not because someone has a cunning plan! God's true church will exist as long as God's love and God's purpose exist, whatever visible form it takes.

5. Thus the 'true church' of God, whether local or denominational, is discerned not by Googling the question and then ticking the traditional boxes which you will find there: 'word' or 'sacraments' or 'ministry'. The point is not to quantify or measure these elements as signs of true church, even though Moderators would be among the first to ask for them to be excellent. Rather we should start by the route of thankfulness in worship and discipleship, which means starting with theology as doxology. That, as our Reformed predecessors might say, is to live by faith responsive to grace.

6. In their report *Gone but not forgotten* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998), required reading for anyone wondering about contemporary church decline (i.e. for all of us), Philip Richter and Leslie Francis say of their survey of people who had left church: "one of four of all respondents attribute their church leaving to the experience that there was too little sense of the presence of God in worship". They list many other factors and statistics, but this is surely among the most striking and least forgivable.

7. As Moderators in our work we perceive the United Reformed Church at its worst as well as at its best, which is why we wish to draw out this strand in our report. We sense the presence of God in the worship and meetings of some of our churches and Districts more than in others. This may be down to us and our own mood swings, but not so as to invalidate the point. In our own monthly discussions we return time and again to this quintessential hallmark of the authentic church; we did it again in the group-work preparing this report. And we agonise over what to do with churches where, to be blunt, we cannot discern God's gracious leading.

8. We welcome the move by 'Catch the Vision' to invite local churches to tell their stories. Across our denomination we all need to inspire and encourage one another. What is needed are not just examples of what 'works' somewhere, but commentary and interpretation to perceive why it 'works', so that in a different context the story can be helpful for other local churches. Otherwise even good stories may be counter-productive. After all, what criteria do we have for success? And what is failure? Every church needs to see where God is calling and how they might obey, in our case as Christians who happen to be Reformed. Every local church can and should set some goals for the next few years, providing always they do not restrict the God of surprises.

9. To repeat: this emphasis on worship and mission does not mean that the United Reformed Church should not re-organise, still less that we should not balance the books, but that our *identity as church* has infinitely more to do with faithfulness and love. Let us sing more often: "*ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*" (Rejoice & Sing 402). Where there is love – love in action – God is there. And where God is, there is hope. And we also need to sing: "for Jesus is alive today" (R&S 639).

10. Three things follow from this basic approach – not that there are only three but we are all preachers!

11. First, in the internal debates within the United Reformed Church (and in most other churches) it is not enough for those on apparently opposing theological 'sides' to respect one another. Christians should love one another for Christ's sake – or we are lost. For example, our particular moratorium on public debate and decision on matters of human sexuality has left some Moderators (not to mention ministers and other members) frustrated or anxious, and all of us ill-prepared for what may follow. The debate has moved on from the 1990s; our new discussions may be as sharply divided but will be different. It is clear, without being any less of a mystery, that to build the kingdom and to preach the gospel God uses ministers and lay people who are gay and also those who believe that such a life is intrinsically sinful. Are these divisions greater than those among the original twelve whose loyalty to Jesus outweighed such matters? Ubi caritas ...

12. Second, in the gospels Jesus is recorded as saying both "come" and "go", "rest" and "work". The good news of God from the apostolic age until now is both invitation and challenge, since both reflect God's grace. But in the United Reformed Church we have probably over-emphasised the latter. We should discern the call of God both in saving us and in sending us. We must comfort the troubled as well as troubling the comfortable. This is complementary to the previous point, for it applies across the theological range of our local ministers and churches. The crucial point is that for all of us it is our thankful response to God which overflows into telling people and into all the other marks of mission. Ubi caritas ...

Synod Moderators' Report

13. Third, recalling that our Reformed predecessors were 'ejected' and journeyed at least five miles out of town for worship and fellowship (and in some cases journeyed across the Atlantic), we of all Christians should not despair at the great ejection which the chill secular wind has brought to all churches in these times. Of course the self-righteousness of the outcast remnant is always a temptation. But God's faithfulness must never be forgotten as we set about finding new ways of being church as our ancestors did, for the sake of the well-being, the salvation, of unbelievers and of society. And that is surely the task laid on all Christian churches and denominations in this generation: in the phrase from 'Catch the Vision', *to make a difference for the sake of Christ*, even though it means costly change! At such a crucially testing time our hold on God through the Reformed tradition and our personal experience matters less than God's hold on us, calling us and sending us in love.

To echo two other songs: the church is wherever God's people are praising and serving and witnessing ... and the creed and the colour and the name won't matter: *Ubi caritas ...*

14. So whether the 'true church' is described in our Reformed language of word and sacraments and ministry or in the a broader definition of 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic' or in a less traditional way as 'ubi caritas', it is God who has led and God who will lead, it is God who has made and who will re-make, it is God who has called and will sustain.

15. We shall be fruitful insofar as we are faithful and effective insofar as we are responsive. It is absolutely vital that we are **caught by the vision** even as we try to catch it.



Retirements: During the year we have said farewell to Peter Poulter, who has served Northern Synod as Clerk and Moderator over the last 14 years; we have welcomed Rowena Francis among us in his stead. At this Assembly we shall bid farewell to Peter Brain, who has served the Assembly since 1990 as Secretary for Church and Society and latterly as Moderator in North Western Synod; we shall welcome Richard Church as a colleague and companion.





South Western Synod Resolutions

Retired Ministers' Housing Society Funds

RESOLUTION 6

Retired Ministers' Housing Society Funds

General Assembly expresses its deep concern at the extent to which the Retired Ministers' Housing Society has found it necessary to borrow funds from the general funds of the United Reformed Church and urges Synods to donate 10% of the net proceeds of any sale of redundant church property held by the Synod under Schedule 2 Part 1 of the United Reformed Church Trusts completed on or after 1st January 2007 and where there is no continuing congregation, to the Society to assist it to repay its borrowing in the shortest possible time.

*Proposed: Revd David Grosch Miller
Seconded: Revd Dick Gray*

1.1 The funds of the Retired Ministers' Housing Society have been increasingly under pressure and this trend is not likely to change in the near future. Thus at its meeting in March 2007, the South Western Synod expressed its concern at the situation and resolved to donate 10% of the net proceeds of any sale of redundant church property held by the Synod to the Society.

Retired Ministers' Housing Guidelines

RESOLUTION 7

Retired Ministers' Housing Guidelines

General Assembly asks the Retired Ministers' Housing Society to reconsider the guidelines for retirement housing in the light of changing circumstances, with especial consideration of ministers serving in part-time pastorates, and asks them to report back to the next General Assembly.

*Proposed: Revd Stuart Nixon
Seconded: Mrs Maria Mills*

1.1 The United Reformed Church's published guidelines on retired ministers' housing contain anomalies which may exclude some long-serving ministers whilst including some who have served relatively briefly. Provision of housing for retired ministers is not an entitlement for every minister, but the United Reformed Church explicitly regards it as a matter of integrity that retired ministers and ministers' widows should be adequately housed.

1.2 Section (4.2) of the Guidelines states that in order for ministers to satisfy the age criteria all applicants must have given either 15 years continuous full-time service immediately prior to the retirement date agreed or a total of 25 years full-time service.

1.3 However, there is currently an increase in the number of part-time pastorates, and therefore an increasing likelihood of ministers falling outside the existing guidelines. By basing eligibility on full-time equivalent service rather than two very different periods of service, the guidelines would become fairer, so, for example, 10 years in a 50% scoped part-time pastorate would be equivalent to 5 years full-time. It is thus requested that these guidelines be reviewed in the light of this to allow for the possibility of ministers in part-time service being eligible for retired ministers' housing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John'.

1.1 A reduction in the number of members, crumbling buildings, few lay preachers and less ministers: a threat or an opportunity? In Yorkshire there are many signs that this situation has been seen as an **opportunity**.

Our Structures

2.1 In common with all Synods, we have been thinking about our structures, building on decisions we made only three years ago to respond to the fact that we were often overburdened by structures and administrative demands whilst at the same time neglecting mission and the needs of the local church. At that time the Moderator reminded us of the call to be:

- a Pilgrim Church
- a Missionary Church
- a Conciliar Church
- a Ministering Church.

2.2 As we have looked at the implications for our 'New' Synod these thoughts have been very much in our minds and we have continued to use this as an **opportunity** to seek to have a structure which aims for freedom, trust and openness enabling creative energy to be channelled into the mission of the church. We recognise also the need for clear aims, objectives and methods of working. There are some common elements related to the style of working which all committees and individual representatives aim to adhere to. These include:

- open and clear communication
- honest and frank expression and genuine listening
- consultation on sensitive issues
- focus on what matters at local level
- informing the 'local' regarding relevant national, Synod and ecumenical initiatives
- ensuring that activity relates to the Five Marks of Mission
- considering the ecumenical implications of any thinking or activity
- a recognition that people take action as authorized by their role
- an agreement that emergency action may be necessary subject to early reporting back.

2.3 During the last three years Districts have been hard at work looking creatively at available resources of people and buildings, seeking **opportunities** to use these as effectively and efficiently as possible. As we move to becoming the 'New' Synod, and again building on the work which has already been done, churches are considering how they may best group together into Mission and Care Groups for the discussion of plans and **opportunities** for mission, deciding what resources are needed and providing each other with pastoral support and encouragement. We expect these groups to range in size and composition depending on local circumstances, some will be geographical but others may be based on similar interests or contexts; flexibility is the key word together with responsiveness to the mission priorities and **opportunities** of the communities being served. We accept that we will not always get it right first time round and that there will be a need for patience and a preparedness to forgive when things do not quite work out as expected.

2.4 Worship is central to the work and witness of any church and hard working pulpit supply secretaries encounter increasing difficulty in 'finding a preacher' for each Sunday. This has resulted in an **opportunity** to create Worship Teams in many churches, one of these teams has District Accreditation and visits other churches as a team to lead worship. Other individual or groups of churches are working with Preaching Teams consisting of a number of Lay Preachers who commit themselves to a particular situation and who plan together to provide consistent and coherent teaching through Sunday worship.

Stories which tell of opportunities for mission within communities

3.1 We currently have two CRCW's working in the Synod – the following account illustrates one of these ministries:

CRCW post in Bradford since 2004

Simon Loveitt's brief is to engage in community development work alongside the church, with the communities around the St John's Centre in Bradford. This is a racially diverse community, scoring highly on the various Governmental indices of deprivation.

The work is partnership based, engaging with many key local people and agencies trying to deliver more successfully a better place to live for the people of Bradford Moor.

Some areas of work include:

Bradford Moor Anti-Crime Partnership – the CRCW is chair of a partnership comprising Councillors, Neighbourhood Police Team, Anti-Social Behaviour team, local community representatives.

Economy and Employment – involvement in Bradford's successful Local Enterprise Growth Initiative application, a £62M scheme over 10 years, to encourage enterprise from the grass roots.

Youth Work – lack of youth provision locally led to work with the youth service, police and other key agencies to discover current provision and gaps.

Bradford Moor Park – the CRCW is chair of a group from a range of agencies who have successfully applied for £100,000 to replace the playground in Bradford Moor Park. The only park in Bradford where photos have been taken of children queuing to enter the playground! Planning for phase 2 is about to begin.

Housing and Environment – Working with, and challenging Bradford Community Housing Trust (BCHT) to deliver a better quality of housing stock.

3.2 There are a number of Special Category Ministry posts throughout the synod. The following illustrate some of the diversity.

Universities Chaplaincy in Leeds

The United Reformed Chaplain to Higher Education in Leeds is a special category ministry post. It is unusual to have a fulltime URC HE chaplain, and this exists in Leeds because of the foresight of a local church [Headingley St Columba] in ring-fencing money in the 1980s to support student work.

The chaplaincy is a strong ecumenical team that works across both universities in Leeds, student population 65–70,000. The ecumenical dimension is real and latterly the United Reformed Church chaplain became the first non-Anglican to fulfill the role of co-ordinating chaplain. The work covers all the usual range of university chaplaincy with the last postholder's work majoring on issues of global equity and sustainability initiating Global Perspectives in Higher Education Networks at Leeds Metropolitan University and UK wide as well as being module leader for modules on working as a global citizen and on spirituality and global issues.

Workplace Chaplaincy

There is one full time and one half-time Workplace Chaplain in the Synod. In South Yorkshire Bob Warwicker is a workplace chaplain. Part of this work involves the obvious things, visiting people in the workplace, talking and listening: specifically in this case going to Sheffield Forgemasters, who make large objects from forged and cast steel, and produce steel for forging elsewhere.

Synod Reports and Resolutions

But there is more to it than that. Bob is also the chaplain to marginal workers, i.e. people whose work is low paid, part time or insecure. These are often people whose workplace managers do not welcome a chaplain. Other ways have to be found of making contact. Over the years, this has involved handing out cards about the national minimum wage to office cleaners in Sheffield, taking part in an embryonic Living Wage campaign in south Yorkshire, trying to contact outworkers in southeast Sheffield, and so on. Other activities include co-editing "IMAgenda", the trade magazine for people who do Industrial Mission. This is all done as part of an ecumenical team based in the Sheffield office: a rewarding and happy way to work.

Flanshaw United Reformed Church – Wakefield January 2006–January 2011

"Say– when is the Archbishop coming?"

These words were uttered by a member of the local community as Moderator of General Assembly, Liz Caswell, was at the Flanshaw Carer and Toddler Funday. In fact 'the Archbishop', as we had called her, was just leaving.

"*She was so normal*".

Such was the encounter of locals with Liz and that really sums up what the initial work has been about in this Special Category Ministry post. Showing that church people can be just so normal.

50% of the post's time is working outside the usual church boundaries on the three estates where low levels of literacy and self confidence abound. Where recently there has been no real positive input from established churches. So bridges are being built and the first tenuous steps are being taken on to them.

This works both ways – for church and for community. Both groups of people feeling cautious and uncertain about what they can offer each other. Both groups recognising they have much to offer each other – more so because they overlap.

Tentative early days, not too rushed but being allowed to serve gently and with hope.

3.3 Many of our churches are serving their communities with or without the involvement of ordained ministry – two examples can be found in:

Beeston Hill United Free Church – Leeds

Beeston Hill's mission is to take the love of Jesus into the community. That community is an inner city suburb, multi-cultural and multi-faith. It was from this community that some of the July 7th bombers came – the community has in the past and continues to work together. Particularly since those terrible events, great efforts have been made to maintain those good relationships.

With several partners the church has created an award winning garden at the side of the premises – the result of a desire to give something to the community.

Against a background of families affected by poverty, drugs and alcohol there are fast growing children's activities: J4J (Juniors for Jesus), uniformed organisations and a Kidz Club with well over 130 children.

The church premises are used daily from 8.00am to 4.30pm by a variety of organisations and Sunday morning worship (including J4J) is well attended with growing numbers of African families joining us.

These are exciting times in this church led by the love of our Lord Jesus.

Little Lane Church – Bradford

The church lies approximately two miles to the north-west of Bradford city centre between the residential districts of Girlington and Heaton and is regarded as being within the Inner City Ring. There is an average congregation of 45-50 people. The population is predominantly Pakistani and Muslim with significant Filipino and Eastern European communities. The social needs in the district create challenges for the church to engage in activities that provide contacts with the community.

The Friday Café is part of the church's service to the community. It provides three course meals at community prices from 12noon-1pm every Friday.

'Girlington Together' is a regeneration project which has an office on our premises. This keeps us in touch with new initiatives and enables us to participate where possible.

Over the last year the church has begun working closely with the Chaplain for the Deaf in Bradford. As a result we host four Joint services a year and have a monthly interpreted service. In January 2006 a Beaver Group was started to serve both hearing and deaf children. This has been positively received.

Opportunities!

4. We could fill many more pages with examples of **opportunities** identified and built on but these give a flavour of the United Reformed Church in the Yorkshire Synod. We were sorry in December to say goodbye to Revd Bernie Collins our Development Officer but we are soon to be joined by a new Synod Development officer – Revd Dr Jim Coleman who joins the team during the summer of 2007. In February 2008, the Moderator – Revd Arnold Harrison will retire and whilst we will be sad to see him go we wish him and Muriel our very best wishes for their retirement. Revd Kevin Watson will join the team in March 2008 and we look forward to the new **opportunities** which these new people will undoubtedly challenge us with.



1.1 In June 2006 the *Synod Festival* saw about 500 people gather to celebrate the variety of creativity we can offer to God in worship, witness and church life. All age groups worked and learned together exploring dance and drama, music from Africa and Iona, contemporary songs and jazz. Others enjoyed art and clay, prayer and church growth, all culminating in "big top" worship in the grounds of Westminster College. Whilst the clown, the dance tuition and the story-teller were employed for the day, all the other workshop leaders, from Godly Play to power-point, crafts to hand-bells, came from our own ranks. It was rounded off with a barbecue and dancing to a jazz band.

1.2 A similar creativity has been at work in developing our response to a changing world. We reported three years ago that we were launching a new emphasis on team work. We have seen this developing in several ways:

- **A.T.O.M.** All Together Offering Ministry is training material for local churches adapted from a pack produced by the Diocese of Chelmsford. It enables local congregations (with assistance from training facilitators) to develop enhanced collaborative working internally, across groups and ecumenically.
- **Population Growth** By 2020 the East of England Region will have had to absorb over 500,000 new homes. New towns will have been created, and existing towns and villages will have grown. The need to keep abreast of these developments, and work ecumenically in negotiating and devising appropriate mission strategies has led to a variety of responses. Three examples are:
 - i. The Methodists in two Districts, the United Reformed Church in two Synods and the Anglicans in one Diocese are jointly employing, from September 2007, a Development Advisor, the Revd Dr Tony Barker (who happens to be a Baptist!). He will keep us up to date on housing plans and enable churches locally to learn how best to respond to major new developments.
 - ii. As an example of such co-operation the Synod has recently bought a house for a Christian worker on a new housing development in Colchester. The Anglicans furnished it, and the Methodists have deployed a Deacon to live there. The sorrow of a church closure in an older part of town has turned to the joy of a new opportunity in mission.
 - iii. The Synod continues to support new ecumenical churches at *Cambourne, Chafford Hundred and Great Notley*. These are stretching the denominational resources to the limit as we reach the building stage. In another new move, we have re-configured the work at Chafford Hundred from being a single congregation LEP to being an Anglican church with an 'ecumenical welcome', as this is felt to encourage local congregational growth more effectively.
- **Local Churches** The Synod has voted to restructure into partnerships, grouping parishes informally for mutual pastoral oversight and for effective deployment of ministry. Each partnership will have an advocate who will relate to the Synod Pastoral Committee and the Moderator in providing support and leadership.

Two areas have already seen major collaboration, with four churches in *Southend* coming together as a single congregation and planning to redevelop the premises on one site for this 'new' church.

In *Norwich* the four city churches have been working together with shared ministry for two years, and are being joined by three other churches by 2008. The three pastoral ministers have been joined by a special category minister whose task is to enable the group to develop in its new way of working, as well as acting as Team Leader for The Norfolk and Waveney Industrial Mission. There will also be a Church Related Community Worker. The churches have retained their independent church meetings whilst having a structure for sharing ministry, manses and shared decision making.

Global Partner

2. During 2005 the Synod voted to create a partnership with the Zimbabwe Presbytery of the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. It is hoped that a group from Zimbabwe will visit us in October 2007 and participate in the October Synod Meeting.

Fairtrade Synod

3. In 2005 Eastern Synod was declared the second Fairtrade Synod within the United Reformed Church.

Manse Policy

4. In 2005 after two years of consultation Synod voted to establish a Synod Manse Scheme.

Ecumenical Area

5. The West Essex Ecumenical Area welcomed churches from the Lea Valley North Methodist circuit in forming the Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area in September 2006.

People

6.1 The Synod has benefited greatly from the energetic leadership of Mick Barnes, our Synod Clerk, particularly in the improvement of office facilities and administrative procedures. Clifford Patten, our Treasurer for seven years, ably led our finance team; we welcome Ron Wade in his place. The Synod gladly continues to play its part in inter-Synod resource sharing.

6.2 We have enjoyed the enthusiastic and wise contribution of our Training and Development Officer, the Revd Richard Church, who has given extra support during Elizabeth's year as Assembly Moderator. We are delighted and sad in equal measure at Richard's nomination as Moderator of the North Western Synod.



Thames North Synod

1. Structures, Synod and Strategy

1.1 Over the last three years all of the synods have grappled with keeping their eyes on mission and renewal while agreeing new structures to accommodate the removal of district councils. In Thames North Synod the challenge has been particularly acute because an Assembly Commission has been at work for two years considering whether a London Synod should be created. Structure and Synod have been accompanied by a third 'S' – Strategy – and the real challenge has been keeping them Separate in order to give each its proper Scrutiny!

1.2 In 2004 Thames North and Southern Synods commissioned a Strategic Review of United Reformed Church presence and witness in London. Work towards a 10-year plan began early in 2005 under the direction of the Revd Vaughan Jones. Through desk research, surveys, focus groups and consultations, Vaughan and his team described the London context and the contribution of our churches, past and present. They commissioned a study of the trends in mission thinking in the 21st century. They badgered the churches to complete a rigorous questionnaire and nearly achieved the 100% response rate they wanted. Presentations at district councils, synod meetings, officers, staff and committee meetings enabled them to test the picture as it emerged. The culmination of the process was a London Summit held on 25th November 2006. They communicated vision and hope for the contribution to be made by a denomination that was socially engaged and ecumenically committed, inheritor of a vibrant tradition of faith. They encourage each church to become a missionary congregation and offer ideas for an infrastructure to support this vision (there is more information at www.urclondon.org.uk).

1.3 Until a strategy is agreed and the London Synod question is resolved, it seemed inappropriate to be too adventurous in the creation of new structures to take over from the district councils. Thames North opted to turn its district pastoral committees into "Area Committees" of the synod, delegating most of the former district functions to them, with minor changes to other synod committees.

2. A world church within the world church

2.1 The multi-cultural life of the synod continues to flourish. In 2006 we welcomed the Revd Shahbaz Javed from the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan to become the minister of the Walthamstow United Reformed Asian Christian Church. A Special Category Ministry has been approved for our Slough Asian congregation so that Urdu-speaking leadership can be recruited for them as well.

2.2 In 2005 conversations began between Thames North and Southern Synods and our partners in the London congregations of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana. Negotiations are now underway to enable these churches to become full member congregations of the United Reformed Church while maintaining their links with their Ghanaian denominations, in a kind of international LEP.

2.3 2006 saw the first United Reformed Church "Ghanaian Conference", organised by the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries Committee. Ghanaian members from many United Reformed Church congregations gathered to worship and discuss issues of mutual concern. A second conference is planned for 2007 and we hope that this will become an annual event, with similar events for other ethnic minority groups.

2.4 The Revd Dr Godwin Odonkor, Ghanaian Minister to London, has nearly completed his four years in our midst. Godwin has undertaken church planting and we hope to recognise a new congregation in Ealing as a Mission Project of the United Reformed Church before long. Godwin will also be remembered for the spectacular service he organised in March 2007 for the 50th anniversary of Ghanaian independence.

2.5 Relationships with our partner churches overseas continue to develop. Ministers from the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren have now joined our Ministers Spring School for four years running, and in 2007 the School was held in the Czech Republic to explore the theme, "The Czech Dream: Memory and Identity".

2.6 Our partnership with the Karnataka Central Diocese of the Church of South India also continues to flourish under the "Belonging to the World Church" programme. Exchanges have taken place in both directions, with Indian delegations coming to the UK in 2005 and 2007 and a visit of Thames North members to India in 2006.

3. Developments on other fronts

3.1 Building on the "Open All Hours" work launched five years ago, our Development and Training Team continued to offer workshops on "Nurturing the Open Church." They also initiated an "Autumn Academy" offering weekend training to lay leaders. New in 2005 was a series of R&R Days – Reading and Refreshment – in which we are invited to read a book and then engage with the author.

3.2 Ecumenical relations have had a new injection of energy with the Methodist Church's boundary changes. The London District will be a significant partner as we implement our London Strategy. And we have joined with the Beds, Essex and Herts Methodist District to employ a Development Worker with expertise in planting churches in new housing areas. We are involved in two ecumenical church plants, one near Bedford and the other in Aylesbury.

3.3 Preparations are underway to welcome and serve visitors to the 2012 Olympic Games. In 2005 representatives of the whole breadth of London's diverse Christian family met to share ideas. An umbrella organisation called "More Than Gold" will build on experience from previous Olympics to enable the churches to coordinate their efforts.

3.4 The Urban Churches Support Group continues its work alongside our urban congregations. Recent events have focussed on gun and knife crime, the churches' pastoral care of the chronically ill, and families and parenting.

3.5 Island House, a synod-owned community centre on the Isle of Dogs, has had a face-lift in the last year. The premises now accommodate a host of new user groups.

4. Personnel

4.1 We are grateful to those who have completed terms of service in the synod since we last reported to Assembly. Peter Hurter stepped down from his role as Mission and Evangelism Consultant, Bob Maitland and Meryl Court completed time as Pastoral Consultants, Bob Allen retired after 12 years as PA, Peter Colwell resigned from the post of Inter Faith Advisor, Martin Hazell resigned as Synod Clerk, Vernon Lane and Erica McKenzie completed their service as Trust Officers, and Michael Gould stood down as Synod Treasurer. We have welcomed a new PA – Mandy Adams – and two new Pastoral Consultants – Lesley Trenkel and Fredwyn Hosier – and look forward to filling the other vacancies soon.



Church Closures

RESOLUTION 8

General Assembly receives notice of the closure of the local churches listed below and gives thanks to God for their worship, witness, and service throughout their history.

Hodge Lea United Church – East Midlands Synod

1.1 Hodge Lea United Church was inaugurated in 1979 by Churches Together in Wolverton (now Wolverton Churches Council), comprising the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Reformed Church. The first Sunday service was held on 7th October 1979. Initially the Sunday services were led by the ministers of all the Wolverton churches in turn, each of the four denominations taking one service a month. Services were usually held in the Hodge Lea Meeting Place in Hodge Lea Lane. Upon his ordination in 1991, Revd Leslie Watson was called to be Non-Stipendiary Minister in charge of Hodge Lea United Church, a position which he held until he was forced to retire through ill health in 2006.

1.2 After many years of discussion and negotiation, Hodge Lea United Church was granted a constitution in 1995 and was recognised by the four denominations who were responsible for the Church's inauguration.

1.3 Hodge Lea United Church members have played a full and active part in the Ecumenical life of the churches both in Wolverton and in Milton Keynes. Hodge Lea estate is small by the standards of Milton Keynes, as it occupies just half a 'grid square', and the congregation of Hodge Lea United Church, drawn largely from the residents of the estate, was never large. However, it offered weekly worship on Hodge Lea for 27 years.

1.4 With an ageing and diminishing congregation, the Hodge Lea Church meeting decided in August 2006 to seek permission to cease regular weekly worship, and the last service took place on Sunday, 1 October 2006.

Dalry – Synod of Scotland

1.1 Dalry Congregational Church, Edinburgh, was built in 1872 with the proceeds of the compulsory purchase of the Argyll Square Chapel [the gift of Revd John Aitkman its first pastor]. Situated among the new tenements of Caledonian Crescent the 40 founding members soon enlarged the congregation to fill the church which could hold about 400. A hall was built which gave room for groups of men, women and young people to meet for recreation and social events in addition to the three Sunday services and midweek Prayer meeting. Latterly, the Sunday School served as the third service but the evening service continued well into the 1980s. In the later years of the 19th Century, after much debate, a pipe organ was installed and over the years contributed greatly to the worship. Many local children attended Sunday School, Uniformed organisations and the Band of Hope and the Annual Sales of Work, Sunday School Picnics and Women's Own Outings were gala days for the whole neighbourhood. Members of the congregation became missionaries, one minister became President of the Congregational Union of Scotland and many ministers worked in the surrounding streets with people in need of all kinds.

1.2 With rehousing taking many local people to the suburbs and the changing social scene membership dwindled and the constraints of a small group coping with a listed building it was with great reluctance that the decision was made to close the church and the majority of the remaining congregation transferred their membership to Augustine United, whose predecessors had also originated in the Argyll Square Chapel. The circle is complete.

Haughley – Eastern Synod

1.1 In 1835 the Congregational Chapel was built with support and encouragement of members of the Stowmarket congregation, and has been part of a group of Village Chapels attached to Stowmarket. Throughout the 170 years it has been open for worship and witness in the village. It had a Sunday school and Women's Fellowship for many years but sadly both closed a few years ago.

1.2 Many improvements and changes have been made to the building during the years and numbers attending have changed over different periods. Sadly extensive repairs are necessary to the Chapel and rear Hall but impossible to fund by the few who attend.

1.3 At a special Chapel meeting, members agreed that due to a small elderly congregation and with some having difficulty in attending due to ill health and also no younger members forthcoming, a decision was taken to close the Chapel at Christmas.

1.4 For many years, members have enjoyed a very good relationship with the Parish Church with united services held at both Chapel and Church, and for the last two years have joined them in their family service each month. There is currently a United Reformed Church style service at the Parish Church on the third Sunday of the month led by a Minister or lay preacher from our denomination.

1.5 A special Carol Service of thanksgiving was held on 18th December 2005 in the Chapel when Lay Preachers and Ministers who have led worship over the past years attended. We thank God for the past; members look forward to worshipping together in harmony in the village.

1.6 A Covenant Service was held at the Parish Church of St Mary, Haughley, on the 5th September, when a 'Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome and Commitment' was signed by The Right Reverend Richard Lewis, Diocesan Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich; The Reverend Elizabeth Caswell Moderator of the Eastern Synod of the United Reformed Church; the Vicar and Churchwardens; the Minister and Chapel members; and representatives of Churches Together in Suffolk.

Dartmouth Road United Reformed Church Paignton – South Western Synod

[Quotes from Records and Minutes over the last 180 years]

The beginnings of Dartmouth Road Church were not auspicious. 'Attempts to start a Congregational Church in 1816 met with such violent opposition that the lives of the preachers were in imminent peril. Not until 1817 did the Pastor of Totnes Independent Chapel hold religious services in a kitchen in Paignton, where some 50 people crowded the place. A local man then gave a site on which to build a chapel which was opened and dedicated for worship of Almighty God and the preaching of the Gospel on November 5th 1818. The following Saturday, 19 persons desirous of forming themselves into a Congregational Church, dedicated themselves into constituting a Congregational Church, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered for the first time in the new Chapel the next day.' About fifteen years later 'the building fell into the hands of the Episcopalians, through unforeseen circumstances, which they had no power to avoid'. So a second chapel was built. In 1875 this chapel was sold to the Bible Christians Community, and 'a building of stone with a tower and attached Sunday Schools affording 650 sittings was erected in the Dartmouth Road at a cost of £2,475 plus an annual ground rent of 10 guineas.'

'The seriousness with which the Sacrament of Holy Communion was observed, and the solemnity of it and Church Membership' resulted in some individuals being excluded at different times because of their 'immoral behaviour'. Moreover, 'if members absented themselves without avowed and sufficient reasons' their membership was withdrawn.

In 1831 special meetings were held to 'pray for deliverance from the dangers of cholera' which was prevalent in the area. It was 'resolved that any members be buried in the Chapel Yards free of charge should they die of cholera.'

In 1835 it was 'resolved that the votes of all female members of the Church be taken at Church Meeting in all spiritual matters and in the choice of ministers', although they were not allowed to speak!

1.1 There was a strong tradition of helping outside bodies, both national and local, through financial and personnel support throughout the Church's life. Such activities included financial contributions to the local hospital and supporting a petition against Council plans to allow Sunday cricket in a local park. In 1947 the Church joined the United Nations Association and appointed two representatives to the Paignton Civic Fund. In 1948 2,000 ship halfpennies were collected by the young people of the Pilots and Girls' Life Brigade for the John Williams VI missionary ship.

1.2 Soon after the Church was built, there were 'problems with gas and heating pipes, the tower let in water, the ventilators let in draughts and the acoustics were poor.' In 1947 the tower suffered from storm damage and slipped slates caused water damage which resulted in the organ being out of action for many months. In recent years vandalism has added to the problems, and the increasing cost of maintaining the building by a dwindling and ageing congregation had become a heavy burden. So it was decided, sadly, to hold a final Service at the end of June 2006. But, to quote words written in 1944, 'We owe a great debt of gratitude to the faithful servants of God who in past years formed such Churches...for their fidelity to God and devotion to the cause... and their preaching the Gospel of Christ which is still as ever the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.'

Ventnor URC – Wessex Synod

1.1 A chapel was erected on the site, at a cost of £500 and opened in September 1836. This was demolished in 1853 and a new church built on the same site at a cost of £2,300. The organ was a gift from Mr Edward Thompson along with the three-bayed stained-glass window in the organ chamber. The new church opened on the 4th August 1854. It was enlarged in 1872 and again in 1881.

1.2 The organ was destroyed by enemy action in September 1942 which also made the church unusable. The congregation then worshipped with the Baptists for four years until the church hall was repaired in 1946 and the congregation returned to worship there. In 1948 it was decided to rebuild the church and an appeal was started to raise the remaining £3,034 needed to meet the total cost of £14,500 for the rebuild.

1.3 In September 1976 a Local Ecumenical Partnership was established with the Methodist Church, using their building. On 23 February 2006 the church meeting voted unanimously to end the Partnership. After discussions and following the ending of the sharing agreement, this has taken effect from 1 May 2007.

Dodington United Reformed Church Whitchurch, Shropshire – West Midlands Synod

1.1 The Cause began in 1662 by Revd Philip Henry. A meeting house was opened for worship in 1798 with the sermon preached by Matthew Henry.

1.2 The present building was opened in 1847 by Dr Raffles. It has been lovingly cared for but recently the small and ageing congregation found that the size and style of the building had become a problem and raised issues of accessibility for the membership. The decision was taken to close and members have settled in various chapels with only two housebound people, both in their nineties, not attending regular worship.

1.3 The final service took place on 30 July 2006. The building which was Grade 2 listed has now been sold.

United Reformed Church, East Sheen, London SW14 – Southern Synod

1.1 We cannot be sure about the beginnings of dissent in the Mortlake/East Sheen area but it was certainly assisted by the licensing of a Chapel for the Dutch weavers working in the Mortlake Tapestry which enabled non-conformists in the area to worship without persecution.

1.2 Following the Act of Uniformity of 1662 the Revd David Clarkson was ejected from the Parish of Mortlake for his dissenting views and he is regarded as the first minister of what was to become East Sheen Congregational Church. The Dutch Chapel closed in 1644 and it is certain that under David Clarkson's leadership services were held in members' homes, a situation that continued under various leaders until 1716.

1.3 This was the year of the first settled minister who, at his own expense, built a Chapel. In 1755 the then Chapel owner disposed of it for other uses so the few members reverted to meeting in private homes until 1813 when a further Chapel was built.

Church Changes

1.4 On 12 April 1822 the members re-constituted themselves with a statement of beliefs and resolutions on conduct and behaviour and it is this action that is considered to be the foundation of the Church, as it became known. Subsequently in 1836 the congregation were able to repossess the original Chapel.

1.5 The church continued with small numbers and series of ministries for a number of years. During one short but notable ministry, a British School was established and this provided education in the area for 40 years until the state became responsible for education.

1.6 Membership numbers slowly increased and by 1890 it was considered that a larger building was required to meet the congregation's needs. This was finally achieved when the new building was opened in 1902 by which time the congregation had doubled in number.

1.7 For the first part of the twentieth century the Church's fortunes fluctuated reaching a high point in the 1940s with its greatest numbers. It was during this period that in 1913 the congregation decided to add to the buildings for a Sunday School that resulted in the present extensive premises which are enjoyed by a number of local activity groups. More recently the membership has declined to the point that it is reduced to single figures and no longer able to show the tenacity with which to rebuild again.

1.8 During the last few years members of Richmond Green provided support for the remaining few, by sharing the premises whilst their own was being rebuilt. It was with the knowledge that Richmond Green was soon to return to their own site that East Sheen resolved to cease. Richmond Green happily accepts their subsequent pastoral care. In addition there are positive moves to retain the buildings and revitalise them as an ecumenical community building.

The Rock Church Centre Liverpool – Mersey Synod

1.1 The Rock Church's origins go back to the 1960s when the youth club of the former Presbyterian Church in Queen's Rd, Everton, after the church's closure, continued to meet in a redundant pub called the Breckfield Inn, which was converted into a Youth Club with an upstairs chapel.

1.2 Eventually, after calling a minister, the Revd John Johansen-Berg, the Rock Church Centre was opened in 1972 and a pioneering community ministry reaching out to young and old alike was developed. This ministry was continued faithfully over the next thirty years and gained support from many "Friends of the Rock" throughout the country and was well regarded by the community, especially for its work with younger people, a number of whom have gone on to serve the church in ordained and other ministries.

1.3 In the last few years, however, the worshipping congregation has grown smaller and a number of significant building problems emerged, which led to the attached Sports Hall having to be closed and other major problems developing. Reluctantly, and with great sadness, the congregation took the decision to close in May 2006 as its work in that place was no longer sustainable. The majority of the Rock's members have found a spiritual home in the nearby Chadwick Mount URC. A service of thanksgiving was held on 2nd September 2006.



1.1 Mission Council's task is to take a comprehensive view of the work of General Assembly; to decide on priorities; and to encourage the United Reformed Church at all levels in its engagement with the world. The scope of this engagement ranges from the local to the international arena, and includes relationships with ecumenical partners in the UK and overseas. While Mission Council services and maintains the work of General Assembly from one year to the next, it is principally concerned about the Church's future direction and the support of all its members.

1.2 Members: The officers of the General Assembly, the past Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the Legal Adviser, the conveners of the Assembly standing committees (except the Pastoral Reference Committee), the synod moderators, two representatives of FURY Council, and three representatives from each synod.

1.3 Mission Council Representatives appointed by synods (in March 2007) were:

Northern Synod	Miss Elaine Colechin, Revd John Durell, Mr Michael Louis
North Western Synod	Miss Kathleen Cross, Revd Rachel Poolman, Revd Alan Wickens
Mersey Synod	Revd Jenny Morgan, Mrs Wilma Prentice, Mr Donald Swift
Yorkshire Synod	Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mrs Val Morrison
East Midlands Synod	Revd Jane Campbell, Mrs Margaret Gateley, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands Synod	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson
Eastern Synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Joan Turner, Revd Cecil White
South Western Synod	Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Stephen Newell
Wessex Synod	Mrs Glenis Massey, Mr Peter Pay, Revd Ruth Whitehead
Thames North Synod	Mr David Eldridge, Revd John Macauley, Revd David Varcoe
Southern Synod	Dr Graham Campling, Mrs Maureen Lawrence, Mr Nigel Macdonald
National Synod of Wales	Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Barbara Shapland, Mrs Liz Tadd
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Revd Alan Paterson, Mr Patrick Smyth

1.4 Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly, taking decisions which are considered to be urgent or time-sensitive, and which need action between meetings of the Assembly. Mission Council may also be asked to undertake a piece of work on General Assembly's behalf. In such cases, the action is reported to a following Assembly, as in **paragraphs 3 and 4** of this report.

1.4.1 Mission Council also acts on its own behalf, taking advice from its advisory groups (e.g. Ethical Investments, Grants and Loans, Staffing Advisory, Section O) which report to its meetings, and which may bring resolutions. These groups have access to General Assembly only through Mission Council, hence the reports at **paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5**, and **Resolutions 9–21**

1.4.2 Mission Council may from time-to-time instigate work, appointing a task group, an existing Assembly Committee or Committees working together to undertake a piece of work on its behalf, before bringing resolutions to General Assembly. **Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2** with **Resolutions 42–49** are the result of this way of working.

2. Our meetings

2.1 Since last General Assembly, Mission Council has met twice residentially and once for a one-day meeting. These occasions were led by the Moderator and worship was conducted by the Moderator's chaplain, the Revd Neil Thorogood. At the October Council Mr Lawrence Moore led a session on the identity and core values of the United Reformed Church, and introduced a presentation on Stewardship. The Revd Dr Robert Pope acted as a theological reflector for the whole meeting.

2.2 On the resignation of the Revd Dr John Parry as convener of the Interfaith Relations Committee, Mission Council approved the appointment of the Revd Peter Colwell as his successor. The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe was appointed convener of the Communications and Editorial Committee on the appointment of the Revd Martin Hazell (formerly its convener) as Director of Communications.

2.3 The 'Catch the Vision' process (although its report appears separate from the main body of this report) was originally an initiative of Mission Council, and it remains one of the main drivers of Mission Council's agenda. 'Catch the Vision' (spearheaded by the General Secretary and a small task group) has brought to Mission Council a diverse range of issues such as governance and the renewal of our spiritual life.

3. Action taken on previous Assembly resolutions which referred matters to Mission Council

From Assembly 2005:

3.1 Resolution 2 (2005): 'Saying sorry': 'General Assembly, noting the actions of the Methodist Church with regard to those who have been sexually abused', instructed Mission Council 'to prepare recommendations for similar actions on the part of the United Reformed Church and to bring them to the Assembly of 2006'. After clarification with officers of the Methodist Church and careful discussion, Mission Council agreed that 'as situations arise, and in particular circumstances, the Synod Moderator concerned may consult the General Secretary and the Assembly Moderator to see if a one-to-one meeting, offered in a pastoral context, would be both helpful and appropriate.'

3.2 Resolution 42: London Synod Commission: General Assembly asked Mission Council to appoint a Commission of Assembly to investigate the feasibility of creating a London synod, and to report back to the 2006 Assembly. The Commission, convened by a former Assembly Moderator, the Revd Bill Mahood, assessed the rationale for a London synod, and sought to discover whether the advantages significantly outweighed the disadvantages. Mission Council, receiving the Commission's report at its March 2007 meeting, noted that the majority view of the Commission was that the creation of a London Synod would be "visionary and timely", and that the consequences and costs of change would be "acceptable". In preparation for future proposals to General Assembly, Mission Council asked the London Synod Commission to facilitate and consider reports on (amongst other things) the mission justification for a London synod, synod boundaries (in consultation with all the synods affected); the division of resources; financial and staffing implications; synod offices; and Trusts. It also asked the Commission to consult Thames North and Southern synods by co-opting two representatives of each synod to the Commission. Mission Council also set a timetable, asking that initial proposals should be brought to the synods' Spring meetings in 2009, and firm proposals in Autumn 2009, so that final proposals could be brought to Mission Council in March 2010. If these proposals were accepted they would be presented to General Assembly in 2010. If approved, a London Synod could then be fully operative, with all structural arrangements in place, by General Assembly in 2012. In the meantime, regular progress reports should be made to the Thames North Synod Executive Committee; the Southern Synod Mission and Strategy Group; and to Mission Council.

Mission Council Reports and Resolutions

3.3 Resolution 34: Developing Multicultural Ministry: General Assembly authorised the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee to conduct an audit of church structures, policies, procedures and practices for the presence of barriers to the full participation of minority ethnic people. It also sought to evaluate the accessibility, to minority ethnic people, of the systems of candidacy and training for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Work, lay preaching and lay leadership; and to bring a report to Mission Council. The scale of the task meant that it took longer than anticipated to complete the report, but it was presented at the March 2007 meeting. Mission Council consequently authorised the drafting of an ethnic monitoring form to be included in the Annual Returns made by local churches; the Council also seeks to encourage all synods to support and enable URC Minority Ethnic Conferences; promote the use of training material prepared by the Committee; and generally seeks to make the Church at all levels more intentional about promoting multicultural inclusiveness.

From Assembly 2006:

3.4 Resolution 1 instructed Mission Council to explore consensus procedures for decision making at Assembly level and bring detailed proposals to the 2007 Assembly. Mission Council was asked also to explore ways in which the background information on key resolutions could be made available to local churches sufficiently in advance of Synod and General Assembly meetings to allow issues to be discussed so that representatives could be aware of the views of the wider membership. Mission Council agreed the report of a special task group set up to investigate these matters (See Booklet *Consensus Decision Making for the United Reformed Church*) and brings **Resolution 50** to Assembly.

3.5 Resolution 2 instructed Mission Council to investigate the possibility of changing United Reformed Church regulations to allow **flexibility in the provision and payment for housing for Non-stipendiary Ministers**. Mission Council agreed a paper produced by the Ministries Committee which set out the conditions under which synods would be permitted to provide 'house for duties' to ministers in non stipendiary service. Individual synods would be responsible for determining whether and under what additional conditions (to those agreed by Mission Council) housing could be made available.

3.6 Resolution 4 instructed Mission Council, in the light of the diminishing government funding available for the repair and upkeep of historic church buildings, to revisit the Assembly's 1995 resolution which urged members and councils of the church to dissociate themselves from the **Lottery**. Mission Council commissioned a report from the Church and Society Committee, and brings its findings (**Document 1**) and **Resolution 41** to Assembly for a decision.

3.7 Resolution 10 on the **Ministerial Incapacity Procedure** was reconsidered by the Section O Advisory Group. Mission Council agreed that resolutions be brought to Assembly for decision. (**Resolutions 12, 13, 14 and 15; and Document 5**).

3.8 Resolution 40 asked Mission Council to bring proposals on extending the 'Declaration of a Safe Church' to cover emotional, physical and domestic abuse and neglect. Mission Council appointed a task group, convened by Mrs Rosemary Johnston, to investigate this matter. The group intends to report to the October 2007 Mission Council.

4. Actions taken on behalf of General Assembly

4.1 Appointments:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly,

- 4.1.1 appointed the Revd Martin Hazell as Director of Communications from 1st January 2007 until 31st December 2011;
- 4.1.2 appointed the Revd Roy Lowes as Secretary for Education and Learning for a further term from 31st July 2007 until 1st August 2012;
- 4.1.3 approved the continuation of the post of Secretary for Church and Society;

- 4.1.4 authorised the part-time post of Editor of the United Reformed Church's Assembly Journal/Periodical, and agreed that this should no longer be a General Assembly appointment;
- 4.1.5 approved the post of Secretary for Mission;
- 4.1.6 agreed an extension to the post of Children's Work Development Worker until December 2009 (pending a review of staff in the area of Youth and Children's Work);
- 4.1.7 agreed to extend the service of the Revd Christine Craven as Secretary for Ministries until 31st July 2008;
- 4.1.8 appointed the Revd Dr Susan Durber as Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge from the 1st August 2007 to 31st July 2014;
- 4.1.9 nominated Ms Linda Austin, Mr John Ellis and the Revd Dr David Thompson as directors of the United Reformed Church Trust.

4.2. **Trident Debate:** In the light of the 2006 Assembly's adoption of the report 'Peacemaking: a Christian Vocation', and because of the need to make a prompt ecumenical response to the parliamentary debate on the renewal of the Trident nuclear submarine programme, Mission Council expressed support (with partner Churches) for the Big Trident Debate group; and called upon the UK government to publish comprehensive information on all key issues, including both nuclear and non-nuclear options, so that there could be an informed public and parliamentary debate before any decision was taken. Mission Council reaffirmed the churches' opposition to Britain having a Trident nuclear weapons programme; and asked the Church and Society Committee, acting with colleague Churches if possible, to encourage church members to write to their MPs (and, where appropriate, MSPs) expressing opposition to the renewal of Trident.

4.3 Resolutions on behalf of General Assembly

- 4.3.1 Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 2007 at £20,424

5. Other Actions

5.1 Mission Council, noting that the moratorium on decision making about human sexuality in relation to ministers of word and sacrament was due to expire at Assembly 2007, set up a task group, convened by the Revd Malcolm Hanson, to consider the present situation and bring a proposal to the 2007 Assembly. The full report can be found in **Document 2**, with **Resolutions 42–48**.

5.2 The 'Commitment for Life' Sub-Committee in conjunction with the Church and Society and Ecumenical Committees submitted a paper to Mission Council on **Global Warming/Climate Change (Document 3)**. Mission Council agreed that **Resolution 49** should be presented to Assembly.

5.3 Mission Council resolved that any disciplinary situations involving CRCWs which arose before Assembly 2008 would be dealt with under the Section O Process in the same manner as if the CRCWs concerned were Ministers of Word and Sacrament (subject only to any necessary changes arising from the particular ministry exercised by CRCWs).

5.4 Mission Council welcomed the review of the pilot scheme (which had operated since 1st September 2006) of the **Joint Public Issues Team**, in which United Reformed, Methodist and Baptist Union staff collaborate on issues which include social justice, and other church and society matters in the public domain. Mission Council, noting that the JPIT Management Group was satisfied that ecumenical cooperation was the most effective way in which the three denominations could engage with Public Issues, resolved (subject to the agreement of our ecumenical partners) that the Team should continue beyond the pilot year, subject to annual reports and three-yearly reviews.

5.5 In response to the *Catch the Vision* Report brought to the 2006 Assembly (Reports pages 131, 132, 138 and 139) and the decision to establish a new Trustee body, Mission Council considered a **new Governing Document for the United Reformed Church** (page 79).

Mission Council Reports and Resolutions

5.6 Mission Council agreed a revised terms of reference for the Equal Opportunities Committee.

5.7 **Ministers' Pension Fund Board Membership:** Mission Council agreed to bring a resolution to General Assembly which approves a revised arrangement for nominating directors of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. Currently the Board has twelve directors (the Trustees) comprising four ex officio directors, four directors nominated on behalf of the Church and four directors nominated on behalf of the members. The nominated directors are brought to General Assembly by Nominations Committee for approval.

5.7.1 Recent changes in legislation relating to the membership of Pension Fund Boards requires

- a) that not less than one third of the directors are member representatives and
- b) that they be nominated by the members, and not by Nominations Committee and General Assembly.

Accordingly a new process is being designed which complies with the law and will be brought into force from General Assembly 2007.

5.7.2 The opportunity has been taken to review the company Articles of Association regarding the appointment of directors. Appropriate changes in the Articles were agreed at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Company.

5.7.3 From General Assembly 2007, the Board will comprise:

- a) four directors who serve by virtue of their office: the Honorary Treasurer; the Convener of the Maintenance of Ministry Committee; the Convener of the Pensions Executive; and the Convener of the Investment Committee;
- b) four directors nominated on behalf of the Church, selected by procedures recently introduced for selecting the Trustees of the Church;
- c) four directors nominated on behalf of members, following the same new procedure.

5.7.4 Mission Council agreed the composition of the Board and the revised arrangements suggested for the nominating directors; and invites General Assembly for approval. (**Resolution 22**, page 76)

5.8 Mission Council discussed a revised remit for the Finance Committee, and agreed to bring a resolution to General Assembly for approval (**Document 7**, page 115 and **Resolution 32**, page 116)

5.9 Mission Council discussed over several meetings a series of papers produced by the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee on the Ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church. These were authorised by Mission Council to be distributed by the Committee for discussion throughout the Church, and (where appropriate) as an ecumenical resource.

5.10 The Revd Dr David Cornick completes his first term of service as General Secretary of the United Reformed Church at Assembly 2008. Mission Council appointed a group to initiate a process of review and bring a proposal to the 2007 General Assembly.

6. Reports of Advisory Groups to Mission Council

6.1 Resource Sharing Task Group

6.1.1 The important change of emphasis in the approach to resource sharing as being "needs driven" continues. All meetings have been conducted in a good spirit with openness and transparency an essential element. The work towards the goal of greater sharing of resources between synods carries on and those involved in the process are always looking for new ideas and ways to improve what is already in place.

6.1.2 The exchanges of information and ideas between synods have proved to be useful and beneficial. There is evidence of a greater collective understanding of the problems and concerns faced by individual synods.

6.1.3 The three main issues under constant review are the use of receipts from the sale of properties; the use of manse funds; the expenditure of funds on church buildings.

6.1.4 Also under discussion at the full consultation held in September 2006, was the definition of "Core Tasks" of a new synod, referred to as Synod 14. Ms Rachel Greening presented a brief paper to the September 2006 consultation which attempted to define a model synod and what it might look like including what the "core tasks" may be if one was starting with a blank canvas. Whilst it is understood all synods would not be the same, Synod 14 as a model could be developed through consultation to establish core functions and costs and could be used as a template from which to measure individual synod variations to meet local needs.

There was general consensus that the following topics were relevant to all synods:

- what does the local church expect of the organisation?
- raising funds to meet the commitment to the Ministry and Mission Fund;
- staffing levels in synods;
- fund raising – generally – how can sources outside the church be accessed?
- the creation of the Synod 14 model – how should it look?

6.1.5 Synods are asked to look at these issues and suggest ideas and ways of moving forward to meet the challenges of the future in a more effective and efficient way. It is suggested this can best be achieved through the quartet and quintet meetings of synod representatives to be held in June/July 2007.

6.1.6 The Task Group has met on several occasions since the General Assembly in 2006. In continuing their analysis of the "core tasks" and finance issues they have identified a number of ideas which they will debate in the coming months. They are as follows:

- mission – money follows mission – money enables mission;
- changes to the structures – the removal of district councils;
- the creation of new synods;
- input from people – use of volunteers or not;
- meeting Mission and Ministry payments.

6.1.7 It was also agreed some consideration should be given to looking for an alternative to what was called 'soft' grant options. There needs to be a change in the mind-set away from pouring money into buildings irrespective of their benefits for mission, to a more creative ecumenical partnership approach where churches come together, to share resources of buildings, finance and people.

6.1.8 There is still more work to be done in seeking to encourage all synods towards the harmonisation of policies on a number of related issues. There appears to be some evidence of a willingness to move closer towards the objective but some synods still remain to be convinced.

6.1.9 The Revd Martin Hazell (Thames North) and Mr Clifford Patten (Eastern Synod) have both stood down as representatives to the consultation process. Mr Hazell also served on the Task Group. Both have made significant contributions to the whole process over the years and the United Reformed Church is indebted to them for their valuable service to the church. Replacements will be notified in due course.

6.2 Ethical Investment Advisory Group

6.2.1 As requested by Mission Council, the Ethical Investment Advisory Group has obtained information from Synods on the value, management and allocation of their investments, and on their current ethical policies. The response was good, and the results are summarized below.

Mission Council Reports and Resolutions

- 6.2.2 Synod investments totalled over £63m; in addition, the United Reformed Church Trust had £20m invested, and the Ministers' Pension Fund £72m. Seven Synods, with investments totalling £44m, invest entirely through charity-pooled investment funds, such as CCLA's Charities Investment Fund, Epworth's Affirmative Equity Fund and M&G's Charifund. The ethical policies of these funds are published, and are monitored by the investment committees of the United Reformed Church Trust and Synods. Six Synods invest about £20m directly via stockbroker managers. For them, the ethical policy has to be agreed with the manager, and monitored more regularly. Most of these Synods have agreed policies in line with Assembly guidance; we noted that the policy of Northern Synod is more permissive, and that its investments were particularly wide-ranging.
- 6.2.3 In March 2006, Mission Council asked EIAG to explore the possibility of extending the scope of the United Reformed Church's ethical investment guidelines, to include the impact of a company's behaviour among the factors to be considered by United Reformed Church investors. This would be a substantial piece of work and the Group has been exploring the possibility of undertaking it jointly with colleague denominations. Discussions are continuing.
- 6.2.4 During the year, the Church Investors Group, in which the United Reformed Church is active, wrote to British Airways expressing its concern that a Christian employee had been refused permission to wear a cross at work; CIG noted that the publicity arising could adversely affect share values. The United Reformed Church added its name to the letter, and the Ethical Investment Advisory Group welcomed the Church Investors Group initiative.

6.3 Section O Advisory Group

- 6.3.1 The Advisory Group continues to review the Ministerial Disciplinary Process in the light of experience. The Process is necessarily complex and detailed but we seek to do what can be done to help those who have the unenviable task of using it. The Group realises how much the Church owes to those who accept such responsibilities. We both recognise and emphasise the constraints imposed on all concerned by the need for complete confidentiality.
- 6.3.2 We have been happy to welcome Mrs Wilma Frew as Secretary of the Assembly Commission.
- 6.3.3 We are grateful to Mr Hartley Oldham for remaining a member of the Group, accepting a continuing responsibility for the training of those who operate the Process. We are about to undertake a major review of training for members of Mandated Groups and the Assembly Commission.
- 6.3.4 In the light of the Resolution concerning Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) passed at General Assembly in 2002 and ratified in 2003 we are bringing resolutions which will bring Church Related Community Workers under the provisions of Section O.
- 6.3.5 Assembly asked the Group to prepare a separate Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (MIP), and we emphasise that such a Procedure should not be seen in any sense as disciplinary. Assembly in 2006 referred our proposals back to the Group and through *Reform* we sought wider views about areas of concern. In the event we received very few representations but have been able to take into account points made to us. We have also made the necessary changes to bring CRCWs under the provisions of the MIP.
- 6.3.6 The MIP is needed so that the Church can address a situation where a minister or CRCW can no longer exercise ministry on account of i) medical and/or psychiatric illness and/or ii) psychological disorder and/or iii) addiction but is

not able to recognise or accept that this is the case. It is hoped that in such difficult circumstances issues can be resolved pastorally by those having oversight of the minister or CRCW or through the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee. However there could be circumstances where a situation cannot be so resolved and for the sake of the Church and the minister or CRCW a formal procedure is required as a last resort. It is important to note that should a MIP hearing decide to remove a minister or CRCW from our roll the MIP does contain an appeal procedure, a point that may not have been made sufficiently clear previously.

- 6.3.7 We recommend that Mission Council appoints an Advisory Group to oversee the MIP (Section P).
- 6.3.8 We are bringing eleven Resolutions to General Assembly 2007. **Resolution 9** invites the Assembly to ratify its decision of 2006 to introduce a new Part I of Section O (2006 Resolution 8). It should be noted that Mission Council, acting on behalf of the Assembly, altered the wording in order to remove references to the MIP. It was this altered wording which was presented to the Synods for review.
- 6.3.9 **Resolution 10** invites the Assembly to ratify the amendments to the Structure in relation to Section O, first approved by the Assembly last year under Resolution 9.
- 6.3.10 We are presenting a revision of Part II of Section O at **Resolution 11**. The changes are necessary because of the new Part I, and because of some improvements which have been prompted by experience gained from recent cases. Recognising that many ministers serve in posts with outside bodies (for example prison and hospital chaplaincies, posts in education and youth and social work), changes are being introduced to provide that any necessary information concerning disciplinary steps which involve a minister working in any such post is, where appropriate, brought to the attention of the organisation concerned.
- 6.3.11 The Assembly is asked to approve Part I of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure at **Resolution 12**, and to note the proposed Part II at **Resolution 13**, which takes the same form as Resolution 11 of 2006.
- 6.3.12 It has been recognised that, when an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission makes recommendations concerning a minister's future ministry, it is necessary for the Synod to monitor the situation to ensure that these are brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the Minister in future. **Resolution 14** creates a new Synod function to cover this.
- 6.3.13 **Resolution 15**, which is the same as Resolution 12 of 2006 apart from the deletion of the final paragraph which related to the Rules of Procedure on appeals and the addition of references to CRCWs, amends the Structure in relation to the MIP.
- 6.3.14 **Resolution 16** seeks to replace the changes to Part I of Section O which were removed by Mission Council when the MIP was referred back by the Assembly last year. These are the necessary changes to Section O occasioned by the introduction of the MIP. It also includes the necessary references to CRCWs.
- 6.3.15 **Resolution 17** effects the same changes as Resolution **16** but without references to the MIP. (This resolution is necessary in case the Assembly either in 2007 or the next following Assembly rejects the MIP.)

Mission Council Reports and Resolutions

6.3.16 **Resolution 18** amends the Structure to introduce a new Part II to Schedule F in order to make similar provisions for CRCWs to those which appear in Schedule E in relation to Ministers of Word and Sacrament. It also makes one small change to Schedule E itself.

6.3.17 Finally, **Resolution 19** introduces the necessary changes to the Structure to bring CRCWs under the provisions of Section O.

6.3.18 Resolutions **12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19**, if passed, are subject to the “two year rule”, and will therefore be sent to Synods for consideration before returning to Assembly for ratification.

6.3.19 Part II of both Section O and the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (Section P) will need to be amended to include references to CRCWs. Among others, that will be a major task for the Group in the coming year.

6.4 The Grants and Loans Group administers the Church Buildings Fund, which provides grants and loans to churches to assist with improvements/modifications to church buildings, and the Mission Project Fund, which provides grants for mission work. We have continued our policy of giving grants only to synods and churches with the greatest need.

6.4.1 Budget Provision

For the year 2006 the budget for grants from the Church Building Fund was approximately £97000, which has been used primarily for provision of funds for facilities for the disabled. By the end of the year £54000 had been spent, with £36000 granted but not yet spent and a further £20000 was approved at the December meeting. There is always a problem knowing when a grant will be taken up as there are often delays in building work being carried out. If the grant is not taken up within 12 months an extension has to be applied for, but will normally be given. Two loans of £60000 and £100000 respectively have been approved for remedial work on church buildings.

The allocation for the Mission Project Fund was £135000 (including £20000 from Carmichael Montgomery Capital Fund) of which we have spent £95000, with outstanding grants of £16000 which have not yet been taken up.

6.4.2 Grants for facilities for the disabled

Once again the expected large drop in applications for grants towards costs of facilities for the disabled did not occur. Thus we have not been able to consider any other projects in 2006. Twelve grants were paid this year and four more approved. Thus with the outstanding grants from earlier in the year already £56000 are committed for 2007. A summary of the expenditure is given in **Document 6**, page 77.

A grant awarded for work on disabled facilities at a church in 2004 was returned as the church subsequently closed in 2005 and was sold off in 2006. It is important that Synods evaluate applications from local churches carefully before giving their approval.

6.4.3 Mission project funding

In 2006 fifteen applications were received of which twelve were approved (five for extensions of existing projects) (see **Document 6**). Annual reports submitted by all the mission projects give an encouraging picture of the initiative, determination and commitment of the people seeking to be ‘church’ in their communities.

6.4.4 Reflections

The Grants and Loans Group believes that the monies it makes available from Central Funds provides a real benefit, both to local churches and communities, and that without it many projects would not get started. We commented last year that the hope was that these projects if successful would become self financing. However it is becoming clear that many of the projects, especially those in inner cities, though very successful, will need continued financial support. If we are to continue giving this extra support then we feel that it is very important that an independent objective evaluation should be carried out. Therefore as a pilot study we have asked one of the projects which is asking for a 5 year extension to their support (Marlpool and Langley) to get an independent assessment of their work up-to-date. We will continue to support the work while this evaluation is being carried out.

In the view of the difficulty of assessing applications to the Mission Project Fund, the Group has decided not to consider applications unless a representative of the relevant synod is present.

Thanks are due to the new secretary, Graham Rolfe, and Rob Seaman (Finance Office) for their work.

6.5 Listed Buildings Advisory Group

6.5.1 The Listed Buildings Advisory Group was established as a sub-committee of Mission Council, some twelve years ago as part of the Church's response to new listed buildings legislation and its wish to accept responsibility, under the Ecclesiastical Exemption arrangements, for managing the statutory controls for alterations to its own listed church buildings.

6.5.2 Its principal current functions are:

1. to liaise with the responsible Synod officers, to ensure that the managing trustees of churches occupying listed buildings and those who deal with applications for consent to carry out work on listed buildings all receive the best possible consistent service to support them in fulfilling their responsibilities under listed buildings legislation.
2. to advise Mission Council and General Assembly on matters related to the legislation.
3. to provide a point of contact with government and non governmental agencies on matters related to the maintenance and conservation of historic church buildings.
4. to ensure that the voice of the United Reformed Church is heard on government and non governmental bodies concerned with the distribution of grant aid, and the development of national policy related to historic church buildings.

6.5.3 These functions take into account changes in the context for its work:

1. Drastically reduced church membership: reduced expertise at local level; historic buildings perceived by some as an increasing burden.
2. The fabric of historic (and other) church buildings further deteriorating because of accumulating arrears of maintenance.
3. Greater rigour expected in denominational management of the ecclesiastical exemption arrangements.
4. Increased responsibility falling on the local leadership (usually the elders) under revised charity law.
5. New attitudes to heritage protection at national and regional level: the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and English Heritage now actively seeking partnership.
6. Wider availability of finance and other resources to assist with the maintenance and development of historic church buildings.

Mission Council Reports and Resolutions

6.5.4 The year 2006 may well be remembered particularly as the year marked by new public attitudes to listed buildings. Historic buildings and with them historic churches, received a higher profile than hitherto. The work of bodies such as the Historic Chapels Trust and the Historic Churches Preservation Trust seemed to assume greater prominence. English Heritage, now responsible for managing the List, adopted a new approach to the denominations. With the high profile launch of their national campaign 'Inspired' they declared that the majority of listed buildings were in fact churches, many of them at risk in one way or another. They started signalling that they wanted to work with the denominations. This goes beyond managing the List per se. It also includes recognising the current life of churches, wishing to work with them to advise on properly managed repairs and repair programmes.

6.5.5 Working with English Heritage
Acting as a pilot study on behalf of the United Reformed Church as a whole, churches in the Yorkshire Synod area responded in 2006 by taking part in two English Heritage projects, the outcomes of which are due to be published shortly.

6.5.5.1 'Religion and Place' was a national project by English Heritage designed to 'focus attention on thousands of buildings that are at the heart of religious, cultural and social life in England today'. During the year, John Minnis, an architectural historian from English Heritage, prepared a study of religious buildings, including United Reformed Church buildings, in Leeds. It comprises a gazetteer of churches and other places of worship active since 1900, with some selected for more detailed study.

6.5.5.2 Fabric needs survey. In order to build up a more detailed picture of the situation, the Yorkshire Synod collaborated with English Heritage in a project designed to evaluate what was needed to put the historic church buildings into reasonable order and maintain them. In November, an English Heritage architect worked with a cross-section of Yorkshire churches, making visits to a sample of them.

6.5.5.3 Further review. Under discussion is an English Heritage proposal to build on the fabric needs survey with a review, probably during 2007/2008, of the listing status of all the United Reformed Church buildings in the Yorkshire Synod area. A similar exercise involving Roman Catholic church buildings in two sample Dioceses proved to be very helpful to that church and it is to be expected that significant advantages will follow a detailed study of the Yorkshire church buildings.

6.5.5.4 Places of Worship Forum. Just over twelve months ago English Heritage set up the Places of Worship Forum and gave it the remit of advising English Heritage concerning its work specifically in relation to historic places of worship. Although the United Reformed Church was not originally allotted a place on the Forum, the Chair of our Listed Buildings Advisory Group has attended most meetings so far on behalf of the Churches Main Committee and so has been able to represent the interests of our Church.

6.5.5.5 The United Reformed Church has now been given a place on the Forum in its own right and so is assured of permanent representation. This is especially important in the light of imminent changes to the Churches Main Committee.

6.5.5.6 With many listed church buildings in desperate need of assistance to keep them standing, in Yorkshire and beyond, these projects have the potential to make a contribution to securing funds to help maintain them.

6.5.6 The listed building, millstone or opportunity?

The Chair and Secretary of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group, together with other representatives of the United Reformed Church, attended in June the conference of the Historic Chapels Trust at their magnificently restored former Unitarian Church in Todmorden, and were impressed by its very positive tone. Also present were leaders of organisations with experience and expertise in helping to conserve and maintain historic places of worship, in almost every case seeing them enhanced as centres of community and spiritual activity. The experience of the Methodists and Anglicans in particular as reported at the conference demonstrated the importance of exploring the value of historic church buildings as a significant asset in the context of mission, outreach and service to the community. They can show us new ways of developing mission in and from the historic church building.

6.5.7 The work of the Group itself

Meanwhile the valuable role played by the Listed Buildings Advisory and Property Committees of the various Synods goes on and the Chair and the Secretary of the Advisory Group wish to pay tribute to all their conscientious and time-consuming work. The Advisory Group meets twice a year and affords the opportunity of bringing all the Synod Listed Buildings officers together for discussion, information and mutual support.

6.5.8 Appeals Procedure

In 2006, General Assembly agreed to make changes to the Structure of the Church to allow for the introduction of a separate appeals system under the Church's Ecclesiastical Exemption Procedure for consenting to alterations to listed church buildings. This allows a church not satisfied with the decision of a Synod to put its case to a panel independent of those involved in the original decision.

As an alteration to the Structure, the original decision needs to be ratified at the present General Assembly and an appropriate resolution (**Resolution 20**, page 75) is followed by a resolution to make a consequential change to the Rules of Procedure on Appeals (**Resolution 21**, page 76).



Mission Council Resolutions

RESOLUTION 9

Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O):

Ratification of Replacement of existing Part 1 (Report page 52 para 6.3.8)

Resolution 9 ratifies the replacement of the existing Part I, first approved by Assembly last year under Resolution 8. Note that this ratifying resolution shows the wording of the new Part I stripped of the cross-references to MIP.

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision to replace the existing Part I of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline with the following:

[Note: The wording below shows Part I without the references to the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, the introduction of which was deferred by General Assembly 2006. On behalf of the General Assembly Mission Council has agreed that these changes be made.]

1. 1.1 Under the provisions of this Section O an Assembly Commission (as defined in Section A of Part II) shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of deciding (in cases properly referred to it) the questions as to whether a Minister has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. Under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (known as "the Section O Process") the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission is also able to make recommendations and offer guidance but only within the limits prescribed in Section F of Part II.
- 1.2 Once the disciplinary case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Section O Process, it shall be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that Process and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.
2. The Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel, the Appeals Commission and all aspects of the Section O Process shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of the Section O Process, save only that, so long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with this Section O Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church.
3. 3.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.

3.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a Minister occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained, where such conduct was not disclosed by the Minister to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination.

4. 4.1 A Minister may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers under Section F of Part II or to issue a written warning under that Section by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure at Part II, stating the ground/s of such appeal.

4.2 The Mandated Group of the Council which lodged the Referral Notice in any case may in the name of that Council appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure stating the ground/s of such appeal. In any case where no written warning is attached to the decision not to delete, the Notice may state, if the Mandated Group so desires, that the appeal is limited to the question of the issue of a written warning to the Minister.

4.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.

5. Procedural matters shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure as contained in Part II.

6. 6.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 6.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

6.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to Part I as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring the Section O Process into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.

6.3 All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 6.2 shall be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 10

Section O: Ratification of amendments to the Structure (Report page 52 para 6.3.9)

Resolution 10 ratifies the amendments to the Structure in relation to Section O first approved by Assembly last year under Resolution 9.

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xviii)

Replace the existing 2(3)(A)(xviii) with the following:

'Where the District Council, acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below, considers that a Minister is or may not be exercising his/her Ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that Minister to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).'

Paragraph 2(3)(B)

Replace the existing 2(3)(B) with the following:

'Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any Minister, whether by the District Council or by one of the other Councils of the Church, the District Council shall not exercise its functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.'

Paragraph 2(3)(C)

Replace the existing 2(3)(C) with the following:

'No appeal shall lie against the decision by a District Council to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any Minister under Function (xviii) above.'

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xiv)

Replace the existing 2(4)(A)(xiv) with the following:

'In the absence of any reference into the Disciplinary Process by the appropriate district council and where the Synod, acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below, considers that a Minister is or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that Minister to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).'

Paragraph 2(4)(B)

Replace the existing 2(4)(B) with the following:

'Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any Minister with the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process, whether by the Synod or by one of the other Councils of the church, the synod shall not exercise its functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.'

Paragraph 2(4)(C)

Replace the existing 2(4)(C) with the following:

'No appeal shall lie against the decision by a Synod to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any Minister under Function (xiv) above.'

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxii)

Replace the existing 2(5)(A)(xxii) with the following:

'To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process for the hearing of appeals under that Process.'

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiii)

Replace the existing 2(5)(A)(xxiii) with the following:

'In the absence of any reference into the Disciplinary Process by the appropriate District Council or Synod (the case of any Minister who is a Moderator of Synod being necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where the General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below considers that a Minister is or may not be exercising his/her Ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).'

Paragraph 2(5)(B)

Replace the existing unnumbered paragraph immediately following the functions of General Assembly with the following paragraph to be numbered 2(5)(B):

'Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any Minister, whether by the General Assembly or by one of the other Councils of the Church, the General Assembly shall not exercise its functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.'

RESOLUTION 11

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

(Report page 52 para 6.3.10 and Document 4)

General Assembly agrees to replace the existing Part II of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline with that included as Document 4 in the Section O Papers.

RESOLUTION 12

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure

(Report page 52 para 6.3.11)

Resolution 12 is a resolution to introduce a procedure (to be known as 'the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure') designed for dealing with cases of Ministers or Church-Related Community Workers who may be suffering from incapacity as instanced in the resolution below.

General Assembly resolves to introduce a procedure (to be known as the "Ministerial Incapacity Procedure") designed for dealing with cases involving Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) who are regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, their respective ministries on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness and/or (ii) psychological disorder and/or (iii) addiction and approves the Introduction and Part I of that Procedure in the form set out below:

SECTION P

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES OF MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY

The Introduction which follows does not form part of the text of the Incapacity Procedure

INTRODUCTION

The Procedure which follows allows the Church to deal with the cases of Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) who are regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, their respective ministries on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness and/or (ii) psychological disorder and/or (iii) addiction. It is not a disciplinary process and will only be invoked in situations where the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee, if that committee has been involved, has said that it can do no more.

Whilst considered as a last resort, the Incapacity Procedure will nevertheless enable the Church to take decisive action in cases where the continued exercise of ministry would undermine the promises made by the Minister at ordination or, in the case of a CRCW, at his/her commissioning.

PART I – subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure

(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi)
of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

Note: The words and expressions marked * (the first time they appear) are defined in Part II of this Procedure.

1. Under the provisions of this Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (herein called "the Incapacity Procedure*") a Review Commission* and, in the event of an appeal, an Appeals Review Commission* shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of considering and deciding upon cases properly referred to it in which Ministers* or Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs)*, whilst not perceived to have committed any breach of discipline, are nevertheless regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness and/or (ii) psychological disorder and/or (iii) addiction.

2. The Review Commission, the Standing Panel*, the Appeals Review Commission, and all aspects of the Incapacity Procedure shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure* to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of this Incapacity Procedure, save only that, as long as that Procedure remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister or CRCW and on all the councils of the Church*.

3. Subject only to Section H of Part II, when the case of any Minister or CRCW is being dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure, it must be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that procedure and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.

4. The Incapacity Procedure shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister or CRCW if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Disciplinary Process, save only where the Incapacity Procedure is initiated as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, giving rise to a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the case within the Incapacity Procedure and the conclusion of the Disciplinary Process in relation to that Minister or CRCW.

5. Although the operation of the Incapacity Procedure is not based upon the conscious breach by the Minister or CRCW of the promises made at ordination or commissioning, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall, in considering the matter and reaching its decision, in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union* and in particular (in the case of Ministers) Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto and (in the case of CRCWs) Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto which state the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers and CRCWs of the Church and the respective criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministries.

6. Save only as provided in Paragraph 7, this Part I of the Incapacity Procedure is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

7. Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by a single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Incapacity Procedure as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the Church, required to bring that procedure into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law and any such changes as are made under this Paragraph shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 13

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

(Report page 52 para 6.3.11 and Document 5)

Resolution 13 takes the same form as Resolution 11 of 2006

General Assembly resolves to take note of Part II of the proposed Ministerial Incapacity Procedure contained in Document 5 and requests Mission Council to bring this to the next following Assembly for decision in this form, subject to such amendments as may be recommended by Mission Council.

RESOLUTION 14

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure: Changes to the Structure

(Report page 52 para 6.3.12)

Resolution 14 amends the Structure in order to create a new Synod function which will give Synods a responsibility in relation to any recommendations or guidance made by an Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission under the Section O Process [or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure – to be added if the resolution to approve the introduction of MIP is approved by Assembly].

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Paragraph 2(4)(A)

Add a new function:

2(4)(A)(xv) to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission following a Hearing under the Section O Process [or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a Hearing under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure – to be added if the resolution to approve the introduction of MIP is approved by Assembly] appends recommendations to its decision not to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers or a church related community worker from the Roll of Church Related Community Workers or appends guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or church related community worker from the respective Roll, any such recommendations are brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or church related community worker in future and that any such recommendations (or guidance, if such be the case) are brought fully to the attention of any others identified under the relevant Process or Procedure as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information.

Renumber the existing functions 2(4)(A)(xv) and (xvi) 2(4)(A)(xvi) and (xvii) respectively.

RESOLUTION 15

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure: Church Related Community Workers

(Report page 52 para 6.3.13)

Resolution 15 taking the same form as Resolution 12 of 2006 omitting the final part of last year's resolution referring to Section C, the Rules of Procedure on Appeals, but extended to bring church-related community workers within the ambit of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (MIP)

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church to bring church-related community workers within the ambit of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (MIP):

Paragraph []

The following to be introduced as a new Paragraph of the Structure to be numbered []

[].1 The Procedure contained in this Paragraph [] of the Structure (known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure) shall apply where those responsible for initiating it in respect of any particular minister or church related community worker consider that s/he is or may not be exercising the ministry of Word and Sacrament or the ministry of Church Related Community Work as the case may be in accordance (in the case of ministers) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto and (in the case of CRCWs) with Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto and perceive the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister or CRCW on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness or (ii) psychological disorder or (iii) addiction.

[].2 No right of appeal shall lie against the decision taken in accordance with Paragraph [].1 above to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in respect of any minister or CRCW.

[].3 The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding.

[].4 As soon as any minister or CRCW becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, none of the Councils of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister or CRCW in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this paragraph.

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(viii)

Replace the words '**the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xv) below**' with the words '**the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xiv) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Paragraph [] of the Structure.**'

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xi)

Add the words '**... and Part I of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Paragraph [] of the Structure.**'

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xviii)

Replace the words '**the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below**' with the words '**the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Paragraph [] of the Structure.**'

Paragraphs 2(5)(A)(xxiv) and (xxv)

Add new Paragraphs 2(5)(A) (xxiv) and (xxv) as follows:

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiv)

'To make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Standing Panel and to any administrative office under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Procedure (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Procedure are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding).'

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxv)

'To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Review Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure for the hearing of appeals under that Procedure.'

Renumber the existing Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiv) as (xxvi)

Identify the Paragraph immediately after the General Assembly Functions as 2(5)(B)

RESOLUTION 16

Changes to Section O Part 1
(Report page 52 para 6.3.14)

Resolution 16 makes changes to Section O, Part I, based on Resolution 1 but extended to make the necessary changes to Section O occasioned by the introduction of the MIP and the intention to bring CRCWs in to the Church's ministerial disciplinary process.

General Assembly agrees to replace the whole of the existing Part I of Section O with the following:

SECTION O

Process for dealing with cases of Ministerial Discipline

PART I – Substantive Provisions

(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi)
of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

- 1.1 Under the provisions of this Section O an Assembly Commission (as defined in Section A of Part II) shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of deciding (in cases properly referred to it) the questions as to whether

a Minister or a church-related community worker (CRCW) has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers or CRCWs as the case may be or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. The Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/referral in accordance with provisions of Paragraph 1.3. Under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (known as "the Section O Process") the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission is also able to make recommendations (other than recommendations under Paragraph 1.3) and offer guidance but only within the limits prescribed in Section F of Part II.

1.2 Subject only to Paragraph 1.3, once the disciplinary case of any Minister or CRCW is being dealt with under the Section O Process, it shall be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that Process and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.

1.3.1 If it considers that the situation concerning a Minister or CRCW involved in a case within the Section O Process relates to or involves a perceived incapacity on the part of that Minister or CRCW which might render him/her unfit to exercise, or to continue to exercise, the ministry of Word and Sacrament or the ministry of Church Related Community Work on account of (i) medical and/or psychiatric illness or (ii) psychological disorder or (iii) addiction, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may make an Order in accordance with the Rules of Procedure referring the case back to the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary or other person who called in the Mandated Group with a recommendation that the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (as defined in Section A of Part II) be initiated in respect of the Minister or CRCW concerned, whereupon the Section O Process shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of such recommendation.

1.3.2 The Rules of Procedure contained in Part II shall provide for the service of the above Order (and any accompanying documentation if appropriate) on the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary or other person who called in the Mandated Group and under those Rules s/he shall be required, within the time therein specified, to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission in writing whether the recommendation has been accepted or rejected.

1.3.3 If the recommendation has been accepted, the notification shall specify the date on which the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure was initiated, whereupon the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall make a further Order declaring the Ministerial Disciplinary case to be concluded, subject only to the continuation of the Minister's or the CRCW's Suspension until the issue of his/her Suspension has been resolved in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

1.3.4 If the recommendation has been rejected, the notification shall state the reasons and the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall forthwith reactivate the Ministerial Disciplinary case.

2. The Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel, the Appeals Commission and all aspects of the Section O Process shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of the Section O Process, save only that, so long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with this Section O Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister or the CRCW and on all the councils of the Church.

Mission Council Reports and Resolutions

3. 3.1 Subject only to Paragraph 3.2, the Section O Process shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister or CRCW if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

3.2 The Section O Process may be initiated in respect of a Minister or CRCW as a result of a recommendation issuing from the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, in which case there may be a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the Ministerial Disciplinary case and the conclusion of the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

4. 4.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular (in the case of Ministers) Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto and (in the case of CRCWs) Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto which state the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers and CRCWs of the United Reformed Church and the respective criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministries.

4.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a Minister or CRCW occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament or his/her commissioning to the ministry of Church Related Community Work as the case may be which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E or Schedule F to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained or commissioned, where such conduct was not disclosed by the Minister or CRCW to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination or commissioning.

5. 5.1 A Minister or CRCW may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers or CRCWs under Section F of Part II or to issue a written warning under that Section by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure at Part II, stating the ground/s of such appeal.

5.2 The Mandated Group of the Council which lodged the Referral Notice in any case may in the name of that Council appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete the name of the Minister or CRCW from the Roll of Ministers or CRCWs by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure stating the ground/s of such appeal. In any case where no written warning is attached to the decision not to delete, the Notice may state, if the Mandated Group so desires, that the appeal is limited to the question of the issue of a written warning to the Minister or CRCW.

5.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.

6. Procedural matters shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure as contained in Part II.

7. 7.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 7.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

7.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to Part I as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring the Section O Process into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.

7.3 All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 7.2 shall be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 17

Changes to Section O Part 1

(Report page 52 para 6.3.15)

Resolution 17 makes changes to Section O, Part I, based on Resolution 1 but extended to make the necessary changes to Section O occasioned by the intention to bring CRCWs into the Church's ministerial disciplinary process. Unlike Resolution 16 this resolution does not include references to the MIP.

General Assembly agrees to replace the whole of the existing Part I of Section O with the following:

SECTION O

Process for dealing with cases of Ministerial Discipline

PART I – Substantive Provisions

(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi)
of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

1. 1.1 Under the provisions of this Section O an Assembly Commission (as defined in Section A of Part II) shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of deciding (in cases properly referred to it) the questions as to whether a Minister or a Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers or CRCWs as the case may be or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. Under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (known as "the Section O Process") the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission is also able to make recommendations and offer guidance but only within the limits prescribed in Section F of Part II.
- 1.2 Once the disciplinary case of any Minister or CRCW is being dealt with under the Section O Process, it shall be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that Process and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.
2. The Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel, the Appeals Commission and all aspects of the Section O Process shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of the Section O Process, save only that, so long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with this Section O Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister or CRCW and on all the councils of the Church.

3. 3.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular (in the case of Ministers) Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto and (in the case of CRCWs) Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II thereto, which state the respective responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers or CRCWs of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministries.

Mission Council Reports and Resolutions

3.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a Minister or CRCW occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament or his/her commissioning to the ministry of Church related Community Work as the case may be which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E or Schedule F to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained or commissioned, where such conduct was not disclosed by the Minister or CRCW to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination or commissioning.

4. 4.1 A Minister or CRCW may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers or CRCWs under Section F of Part II or to issue a written warning under that Section by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure at Part II, stating the ground/s of such appeal.

4.2 The Mandated Group of the Council which lodged the Referral Notice in any case may in the name of that Council appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete the name of the Minister or CRCW from the Roll of Ministers or CRCWs by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure stating the ground/s of such appeal. In any case where no written warning is attached to the decision not to delete, the Notice may state, if the Mandated Group so desires, that the appeal is limited to the question of the issue of a written warning to the Minister or CRCW.

4.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.

5. Procedural matters shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure as contained in Part II.

6. 6.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 6.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

6.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to Part I as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring the Section O Process into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.

6.3 All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 6.2 shall be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 18

Changes to the Basis of Union to include CRCWs in the ministerial disciplinary process (Report page 53 para 6.3.16)

Resolution 18 makes changes to the Basis of Union to bring church-related community workers within the ambit of the Church's ministerial disciplinary process

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Basis of Union to provide for the Section O process to include church-related community workers:

Paragraph 20

Add the following sentences at the end of the paragraph:

In the United Reformed Church all ministries within the life of the Church shall be open to both men and women. Appropriate affirmations of faith shall be made by those entering upon all ministries within the life of the Church.

Paragraph 21

After the words '**to their office.**' add a new sentence as follows:

The ordination and induction of ministers shall be in accordance with Schedules C and D.

After the first paragraph, add an additional paragraph as follows:

The totality of ministers who fall within any of the categories defined within Schedule E, Paragraph 1 and are in good standing may be referred to as the Roll of Ministers. Ministers shall conduct their ministry according to the criteria set out in Schedule E.

Paragraph 22

Replace the words '**and are then commissioned and inducted to their office to serve for a designated period**' with '**are then commissioned to the office of church related community worker and inducted to serve in a particular post for a designated period**'.

Paragraph 26

Remove this paragraph as its contents have been transferred to Paragraphs 20 and 21 in the changes proposed above.

Schedule E, Paragraph 4

Remove the word '**disciplinary**' on the last line.

Schedule F

The existing Schedule F to become Schedule F, Part I and a new Schedule F, Part II to be added as follows:

Part II

Those who have been called to the Ministry of Church Related Community Work and commissioned and inducted to their office in accordance with Paragraph 22 of the Basis of Union shall constitute the Roll of Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) of the United Reformed Church.

CRCWs must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmations made by CRCWs at commissioning and induction (Schedule F Part I) and the Statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which CRCWs undertake to exercise their ministry.

Acting in due exercise of their functions as contained in the Structure of the United Reformed Church, the councils of the Church have authority in certain circumstances (without prejudice to a CRCW's conditions under the plan for partnership in ministerial remuneration) to suspend a CRCW which involves a temporary ban on the exercise of the duties of his/her ministry by the CRCW concerned but not his/her removal from the Roll of CRCWs.

A CRCW under suspension shall not represent him/herself as a CRCW and shall refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he/she is acting as such. Suspension also means that the CRCW may not exercise the rights of membership of any council of the Church. Suspension does not remove any of the rights accorded by the process of determining the matter which had led to the suspension.

A person whose name has been deleted from the Roll of CRCWs and who remains a member of the United Reformed Church has the privileges and responsibilities of that membership, but not those of a CRCW and should refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he/she is acting as a CRCW. However, should that person be re-instated to the Roll of CRCWs he/she would on being called to a post approved by the United Reformed Church need to be inducted to that post but not commissioned since commissioning is not repeatable.

RESOLUTION 19

Amendment of Structure to include CRCWs in the ministerial disciplinary process (Report page 53 para 6.3.17)

Resolution 19 amends the Structure to bring CRCWs within the ambit of Section O

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church to provide for the Section O Process to include church-related community workers:

Paragraph 1(4)

Add an additional Paragraph 1(4) as follows:

Unless otherwise expressly stated or clearly excluded by the context, the expressions 'minister', 'ministers', 'ministry' and 'ministerial' when used in the Structure shall refer to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(i)

After the words '**oversight of**' add '**(i)**' and after the words '**General Assembly**' add '**and (ii) church-related community workers**'.

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(ii)

After the word '**ministers**' (the first time it appears) add '**or church-related community workers**' and after the word '**ministers**' (the second time it appears) add '**and any commissioning and induction of church-related community workers**'.

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(vi)

After the word '**ministry**' add '**of word and sacrament or the ministry of church-related community work**'.

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(viii)

After the word '**ministers**' add '**or church-related community workers**'.

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xviii)

Replace the existing 2(3)(A)(xviii) with the following:

Where the District Council, acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below, considers that a minister or church-related community worker is or may not be exercising his/her ministry of word and sacrament or church-related community work as the case may be in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E (in the case of ministers) or Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II (in the case of church-related community workers) to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister or church-related community worker to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister or church-related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xix)(I)

After the words '**lay people**' add '**/church-related community workers**'.

Paragraph 2(3)(B)

Replace the existing 2(3)(B) with the following:

Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any minister or church-related community worker with the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process, whether by the Synod or by one of the other Councils of the church, the Synod shall not exercise its functions in respect of that minister or church-related community worker (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.

Paragraph 2(3)(C)

Replace the existing 2(3)(C) with the following:

No appeal shall lie against the decision by a District Council to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any minister or church-related community worker under Function (xviii) above.

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(v)

Alter the word '**ministry**' to '**ministries of word and sacrament and church-related community work**'.

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(vi)

Alter the word '**ministry**' (the first time it appears) to '**ministries of word and sacrament and church-related community work**' and alter the word '**ministries**' (the second time it appears) to '**the above ministries**'.

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(vii)

After the words '**Roll of Ministers**' add '**or the Roll of Church-Related Community Workers**'.

Alter the words '**Function (xv)**' to '**Function (xiv)**'.

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xiv)

Replace the existing 2(4)(A)(xiv) with the following:

In the absence of any reference into the Disciplinary Process by the appropriate district council and where the Synod, acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below, considers that a minister or church-related community worker is or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union or Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II, as the case may be, to refer the case of that minister or church-related community worker to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister or church-related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).

Paragraph 2(4)(B)

Replace the existing 2(4)(B) with the following:

Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any minister or church-related community worker with the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process, whether by the Synod or by one of the other Councils of the church, the synod shall not exercise its functions in respect of that minister or church-related community worker (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.

Paragraph 2(4)(C)

Replace the existing 2(4)(C) with the following:

No appeal shall lie against the decision by a Synod to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any minister or church-related community worker under Function (xiv) above.

Paragraph 2(5)(f)

After the word '**ministers**' add a comma and the words '**church-related community workers**'.

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(v)

Alter the words '**adequate ministerial training**' to '**adequate training for ministers and church-related community workers**'.

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xviii)

After the words '**Roll of Ministers**' add '**and the Roll of Church-Related Community Workers**'.

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xix)

After the word '**ministers**' add a comma and the words '**church-related community workers**'.

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxii)

Replace the existing 2(5)(A)(xxii) with the following:

To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process for the hearing of appeals under that Process.

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiii)

Replace the existing 2(5)(A)(xxiii) with the following:

In the absence of any reference into the Disciplinary Process by the appropriate District Council or Synod (the case of any minister who is a Moderator of Synod being necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where the General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below considers that a minister or church-related community worker is or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E

or Paragraph 2 of Schedule F, Part II to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister or church-related community worker to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister or church-related community worker concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).

Paragraph 2(5)(B)

Replace the existing 2(5)(B) with the following:

Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any minister or church-related community worker, whether by the General Assembly or by one of the other Councils of the Church, the General Assembly shall not exercise its functions in respect of that minister or church-related community worker (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.

RESOLUTION 20

Ratification of the Listed Buildings Appeals Procedure (Report page 56 para 6.5.8)

A resolution to ratify Resolution 14 of 2006 as regards a new Appeals Procedure to apply in the case of Listed Buildings:

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision taken under Resolution 14 of 2006 to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Paragraph 5(2)

In the opening sentence, after '**outside paragraph 5(1)**' add '**or paragraph 5(3)**'.

Paragraph 5(3)

Add a new paragraph as follows:

'Applications for consent to carry out works to buildings coming within the Church's Control Procedure under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations for the time being in force and appeals from decisions made thereunder shall be dealt with in accordance with that procedure and not under paragraph 5(2) above.'

RESOLUTION 21

Changes to the rules of procedure on Appeals (Listed Buildings)

(Report page 56 para 6.5.8)

A resolution to make a change to the Rules of Procedure on Appeals as regards a new Appeals Procedure to apply in the case of Listed Buildings:

General Assembly agrees to make the following change to the Rules of Procedure on Appeals:

Replace the existing Paragraph 8.11 with the following: **'The provisions of this Section "Rules of Procedure on Appeals" shall not apply to cases which are being determined within the Ministerial Disciplinary Process or the Church's Control Procedure under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations for the time being in force.'**

RESOLUTION 22

Revised Arrangements for nominating directors of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund

(Report page 49 para 5.7)

General Assembly agrees the revised arrangements for nominating directors of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.



Document 6

Mission Council Grants and Loans Group

1. SUMMARY OF GRANTS PAID FOR FACILITIES FOR DISABLED

North Western Synod	3 Grants	Total	£12720
Mersey Synod	4 Grants	Total	£5000
East Midlands Synod	4 Grants	Total	£19450
Eastern Synod	3 Grants	Total	£11760
South Western Synod	1 Grants	Total	£5000

2. SUMMARY OF LOANS

East Midlands Synod	2 loans	Total	£160000
---------------------	---------	-------	---------

3. SUMMARY OF 'MISSION GRANTS AGREED

Inner Manchester Churches	£16250	over 5 years (NW Synod)
Tonge Moor	£15000	over 5 years (NW Synod)
Abbey Meads	£7000	over 2 years (SW Synod)
Cannington	£2780	over 1 year (SW Synod)
Brixham	£5000	over 3 years (SW Synod)
Plume Avenue Colchester	£9300	over 5 years (Eastern Synod)
Cambourne	£5485	over 3 years (Eastern Synod)
Bury Park, Luton	£9000	over 3 years (Thames North Synod)
Marlpool and Langley	£14000	over 2 years (East Midlands Synod)
Friary, West Bridgford	£37500	over 5 years (East Midlands Synod)
Falmouth	£10500	over 3 years (SW Synod)
Barnstaple	£6600	over 3 years (SW Synod)





Governing Document

General Assembly 2007

Concerning the United Reformed Church and the constitution of a body to take responsibility for and be accountable to the temporal authorities for its religious and other charitable work.

Adopted on the day of.....20..... by Minute..... of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

Statements

The United Reformed Church was formed in 1972 by the union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the uniting churches of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, and was enlarged in 1981 by union with the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, and in 2000 by union with the concurring churches of the Congregational Union of Scotland, in accordance with the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000.

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church represents that church in its entirety including its constituent synods and local churches and its associated bodies and its committees constituted and appointed to carry out the work that is conducted centrally on behalf of all the members of the United Reformed Church. The General Assembly meets once every two years but the members elected to serve or are otherwise entitled to be present and vote thereat shall continue to hold office until the next ordinary meeting of General Assembly.

The General Assembly is the highest review body and the final authority of the United Reformed Church and has under the Basis of Union and Structure of the Church the power to make, alter or rescind rules for the conduct of its own proceedings and of those of other councils and commissions of the United Reformed Church.

The object of the United Reformed Church is to advance religion in accordance with the Basis of Union and to conduct such other ancillary and incidental charitable work.

1. Governing Document

1.1 The property of the United Reformed Church for which General Assembly has responsibility and is accountable shall be administered and managed in accordance with the provisions in this Governing Document.

2. Name

2.1 The name of the body hereby constituted is the Trustees of the United Reformed Church (the Trustees).

3. Object

3.1 The object of the Trustees is to administer and manage the general property held in connection with the United Reformed Church for which General Assembly has responsibility and is accountable and conduct the temporal affairs, dealings and matters of the United Reformed Church which are administered centrally and ensure compliance with the temporal obligations of the United Reformed Church arising from its status and from its pursuance of its objects and work. Within the meaning of the expression in the Charities Act 1993 they are the charity trustees of the general property held in connection with the United Reformed Church.

4. Application of Income and Property

4.1 Money and property will be held by or under the control of the Trustees and be used to further the work of the United Reformed Church.

5. Amendments

5.1 Amendments to this governing document may only be effected by General Assembly by a two thirds majority vote at the meeting at which any amendment is proposed.

6. The conduct of business meetings

6.1 The Trustees shall hold at least four regular meetings each year.

6.2 Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson or by any two Trustees provided that at least two weeks clear notice is given to all the Trustees and the business to be discussed is adequately stated.

6.3 The quorum of the Board of Trustees is six or greater.

6.4 At meetings, decisions must be made by a majority of the Trustees present and voting. The person chairing the meeting shall have a casting vote whether or not he/she has voted previously on the same question.

7. Trustees

7.1 The body of Trustees when complete shall consist of 16 members consisting of 3 ex-officio Trustees, 12 elected Trustees and one nominated Trustee. Exceptionally this may be increased temporarily if additional Trustees are co-opted or the term of service of the Chairperson is extended, as provided below.

7.2 The ex-officio Trustees shall be the Moderator of the General Assembly, the General Secretary, and the Deputy General Secretary.

7.3 Subject to the hereafter mentioned the elected Trustees shall be appointed as follows, namely,

Synods will be grouped into three constituencies (Synod groups)

- Northern, North Western, Mersey, Yorkshire and Scotland
- West Midlands, South Western, Wessex and Wales
- East Midlands, Eastern, Thames North and Southern.

Each group may nominate three Trustees. A Trustee will serve from the end of the General Assembly at which the Trustee from the respective Synod group is due to retire.

7.4 So far as reasonably possible the Synods will co-operate so that the trustee body has the composite skills and is representative of the life of the Church; namely that it has in its number at least one Trustee who has legal experience, at least one who has investment experience, at least one who has finance experience, at least one who has human resources experience and at least one who has full involvement in leading the life and witness of a local church, whether he or she is a minister or an elder. To that end, by mutual agreement and subject to the approval of Mission Council on each occasion, the Synods may vary the Synod representation. The first elected Trustees shall be the individuals listed in the first column of the schedule hereto who have been nominated by the Synod in the corresponding row of the second column of the schedule.

7.5 Except during the initial sequence of retirement, on the occasion of each ordinary General Assembly one elected Trustee from each Synod group shall retire. In respect of

Governing Document

each group, the Trustee to retire shall be the one who has been longest in office. This means that, normally, Trustees elected from Synod nominations shall retire at the General Assembly when they have completed six years service. The initial sequence of retirement shall be as follows, namely, one elected Trustee from each group shall retire at the General Assembly in 2010; followed by one Trustee from each group at the General Assembly in 2012; followed by one Trustee from each group at General Assembly in 2014.

7.6 Mission Council may nominate three Trustees for election, namely, one to be a representative of FURY and two to ensure there is adequate gender and ethnic representation of the life of the Church. Trustees elected from Mission Council shall retire at the General Assembly when they have completed six years service.

7.7 The Honorary Treasurer shall be the nominated Trustee appointed by Mission Council and he or she shall hold office for 4 years.

7.8 In the event of:

- Unexpected vacancy
- Requirement of specific expertise

the Trustees may co-opt up to 2 additional Trustees, with the agreement of Mission Council for such period as the Trustees and Mission Council agree being no longer than 2 years or until the next ordinary General Assembly meets whichever is shorter. A Trustee so co-opted may be nominated for election at the next General Assembly for a Synod or Mission Council vacancy.

7.9 Trustee indemnity insurance will be provided.

7.10 After they have served their term, each Trustee must stand down for a minimum of two years but will then be eligible for re-election.

7.11 Timetable and process for nomination (every two years to coincide with General Assembly):

- Synods and Mission Council consider candidates for Trustees whom they will nominate and seek their consent and agreement to stand for election. Synod and Mission Council may nominate more candidates than the number of vacancies provided that they list candidates in order of preference.
- Synods and Mission Council provide nominations (together with CV and two references – one from the local church and one professional, for each nomination) to the Nominations Committee by the end of November.
- Nominations Committee take up references, review eligibility and discuss with the Trustees at their Spring meeting.
- The Trustees may then interview candidates.
- Nominations Committee in agreement with the Trustees will nominate preferred candidates to the General Assembly for election.

7.12 On the occasion of the impending retirement of the Honorary Treasurer, Mission Council will advise Synods and ask for nominations to be provided to the General Assembly appointment group who will follow the above procedure as part of its process.

7.13 The Trustees will elect one of their Synod nominated members as Chairperson who will act as a facilitator and serve the office of Chairperson. His/her term of service as a Trustee may be extended by up to two years if necessary to provide continuity of Chairperson in which case he/she would be an additional Trustee so that the normal pattern of rotation of Trustees is maintained. The appointment, and any extension of service, will be endorsed by Mission Council. After the term of service, the Chairperson must stand down for a minimum of two years.

7.14 If an elected Trustee is appointed Honorary Treasurer his/her term of service may be extended by up to two years if necessary to provide continuity and in this event he/she would be an additional Trustee as aforesaid.

8. Mission Council's relationship to the Trustees

8.1 Mission Council is the standing representative body entrusted with the general care of the spiritual and ecclesiastical matters of the United Reformed Church. Mission Council is responsible for ensuring that policy, directions and resolutions of General Assembly are carried out and for implementing policy and determining priorities in the conduct of the work of the United Reformed Church between meetings of General Assembly. Subject to these directions, the Trustees are responsible for the application of the income and property of the United Reformed Church.

9. Clerk

9.1 The Trustees at their first meeting after each General Assembly shall appoint a clerk who need not be a Trustee. In this case the clerk may attend all meetings and, with permission of the meeting, may speak but not vote.

10. Holding Trustee

10.1 United Reformed Church Trust shall be the holding trustee of the general property of the United Reformed Church which the Trustees consider may more conveniently be held by that body than by the Trustees.

11. Disqualification and removal of trustees

11.1 Individuals who are disqualified for acting as trustees by virtue of the Charities Act 1993 or the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000 shall not be able to take office as Trustee and if disqualified whilst a Trustee shall cease to hold office.

12. The centrally-managed work of the United Reformed Church

12.1 General Assembly entrusts to Mission Council the employment of staff and the control of costs within a budget agreed by the Trustees.

13. Trustees not to be personally interested

13.1 No trustee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to the United Reformed Church (otherwise than as a trustee) or receive remuneration or be interested (otherwise than as a trustee) in any contract entered into by the trustees.

14. Repair and insurance

14.1 All buildings being general property of the United Reformed Church shall be kept in repair and shall be adequately insured, including third-party and accident insurance as well as buildings and contents insurance. The trustees shall also insure suitably in respect of public liability and employer's liability.

15. Annual Report and Accounts

15.1 The Trustees' report and accounts shall be prepared on an annual basis and presented to General Assembly when it meets and to Mission Council in the intervening years. When General Assembly meets it will also be presented with the Trustees' report and accounts for the intervening year.

RESOLUTION

23

Governing Document

General Assembly adopts the Governing Document for the constitution of the body to take responsibility for and be accountable to the temporal authorities for its religious and other charitable work.

Schedule of Trustees

1. Ex-officio Trustees

The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard	Moderator
The Revd Dr David Cornick	General Secretary
The Revd Ray Adams	Deputy General Secretary

2. Trustees nominated by Synods

	Synod	Retirement
Miss Joyce Bain	Scotland	2010
Dr David Robinson	Yorkshire	2014
Mr Alan Small	Mersey	2012
Dr Brian Woodhall	North Western	2010
Miss Rachel Greening	West Midlands	2014
Mr Ernest Gudgeon	South Western	2010
Dr Augur Pearce	Wales	2012
The Revd Dr David Thompson	Eastern	2012
Mr John Woodman	Eastern	2014

3. Trustees nominated by Mission Council

Mrs Val Morrison	2012
The Revd Michael Davies	2010

4. Nominated Trustee being the Honorary Treasurer

Mr John Ellis	2011
---------------	------





The General Assembly of 2006 resolved to move to a single tier of Church Governance between the Local Church and the General Assembly, this to be the "new" synod. Proposals to bring about the necessary changes by abolishing district councils were brought and agreed and referred to synods for further consideration.

After taking extensive advice we have concluded that the resolutions adopted by the Assembly of 2006 would require changes to the URC Acts and that while this is possible, the obtaining of the necessary Statutory Instrument would be both expensive and time consuming. We do not believe that the mission of the church would be well served by this outlay, and we have therefore sought a different way of enabling the church to do what it wishes to do.

That can be achieved by the simple step of combining the work of synods and districts as far as it is possible, and this paper sets out the ways in which this can be achieved. In order to avoid a Statutory Instrument, district councils will need to meet only to transact the business required under Paragraph 5 of the Scheduled Trusts Section of the URC Acts. It is, of course, up to synods to decide how many districts they would wish to retain in this very limited sense, but our strong recommendation would be one, or at most two, to meet co-terminously with synod. The only time that this will be necessary is when Paragraph 5 business about the disposal of premises which are no longer useful has to be dealt with.

However, these resolutions also permit synods to delegate other powers to district councils and we recommend that ecumenical areas, which are both United Reformed Districts and Methodist circuits, be granted the same powers as they currently hold. This will ensure that the intention of resolution 47 of 2006 is retained.

RESOLUTION 24

Changes to the Basis and Structure

1. General Assembly resolves to amend the Basis of Union by deleting the words "**District or Area Council**" and substituting the term "**synod**" throughout, save in those cases where such substitution would lead to duplication, in which case the words shall simply be omitted.
2. General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by amending the following sections relating to Local Churches to read:

Paragraph 1.(2)(a)

The United Reformed Church in England shall be divided into provinces, each having a synod. In Wales and in Scotland, in recognition of the different status of these nations there shall in each case be a single synod to be known as a national synod. The expression "Provincial synod" when used in the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972 and 1981 shall in relation to property in Wales be read as referring to the national synod of Wales. In England and Wales each synod, if it so determines, shall be divided into districts or areas of ecumenical co-operation; in Scotland the synod, if it so determines, shall be divided into areas or areas of ecumenical co-operation. Each such division shall comprise the geographical area from time to time assigned to it by the General Assembly or by a synod under synod Function(ii). Where the General Assembly or synod has not so determined each synod shall consist of a single district council as hereinafter defined.

Paragraph 2(1)(vii)

to call a minister with the concurrence of the synod(s) (see paragraph 2 (3) (ii)); (Where two or more churches have formed a group or joint pastorate in accordance with paragraph 1(1)(b) or (c) above on the decision of synod under its function 2(4)(A)(iv), the church meetings of each church may, with the agreement of the synod and so long as the group constitution or the statement of intent as appropriate shall so provide, join together as a group or joint pastorate church meeting for the purpose of calling a minister, in which case this function shall be exercised by the group or joint pastorate church meeting.)

Paragraph 2(1)(x)

to consider, always on advice from the elders' meeting, any application for recognition as a candidate for the ministry and to transmit it, if approved, to the synod.

Paragraph 2(2)(ix)

to consider the suitability of any applicant for recognition as a candidate for the ministry and to advise the church meeting about its recommendation to the synod;

3. General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church relating to district and area councils by deleting the whole of Paragraph 2(3) and replacing it with:

2.(3) The district council of each district [being representative of the Local Churches in that district grouped together for the purpose of fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight and united action] shall consist of:

- (a) The moderator of the synod for the time being;**
- (b) A president appointed by the synod, who shall perform the functions defined as applicable to the chairman in the United Reformed Church Acts 1972, 1981 and 2000;**
- (c) A secretary appointed by the synod;**
- (d) Such number of representatives of Local Churches within the district, (currently four) as the General Assembly shall direct, including both ministers and elders, such that the total number of members in categories (b), (c) and (d) shall be equally divided between ministers and elders, to be chosen in such manner as the Local Churches concerned shall;**
- (e) Up to six co-opted ministers or members of Local Churches, normally elders, not exceeding six, if the synod so determines.**

The district council shall meet at least once a year, unless the secretary notifies the members in writing that there is no business for the council to transact.

Functions:

- (A) The district council is responsible for exercising the following Functions:**
- (i) those matters which are the responsibility of the district council under the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000 (including the Schedules to those Acts);**
- (ii) such other matters as may be delegated to it by the synod.**

Changes to the Basis & Structure

4. General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church relating to synods by deleting the whole of Paragraph 2(4) and replacing it with:

2.(4) The synod being representative of the Local Churches in that province or nation united for the purpose of dealing with matters of wider concern shall consist of:

- (a) All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church related community workers engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within that synod;
- (b) All missionaries of the United Reformed Church for the time being on furlough and for the time being resident within the province or nation;
- (c) Representatives of Local Churches within the province or nation who shall normally be members of the elders' meeting of a Local Church and who shall be appointed by the church meeting of such Local Church, the number of such representatives to be in all cases two.
(where a Local Church, whether a local ecumenical partnership or a Local Church organised according to the second sentence of paragraph 1.(1), comprises two or more congregations worshipping in separate locations, the synod may, on the advice of the district council, authorise that Local Church to appoint representatives to the synod from each constituent congregation to such numbers as would be permitted by the above rule if each congregation were a separate Local Church);
- (d) An elder appointed by the synod as an interim moderator who shall be a full member of the synod for the period of the appointment.

Functions of synod:

A. The synod is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below):

- (i) to take action which supports
 - the spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad,
 - the life and witness of the United Reformed Church,
 - the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole,
 - the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed;
- (ii) to encourage church extension within the province or nation, decide upon the establishment of new causes and the recognition of mission projects;
- (iii) to decide upon all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of Local Churches.
- (iv) to take appropriate action on matters referred to it by the General Assembly
- (v) to provide a forum for concerns brought forward by Local Churches and to advise thereon.
- (vi) to make proposals to and raise concerns for consideration by the General Assembly.
- (vii) to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers and, with the moderator of the synod or the moderator's deputy presiding, to conduct, in fellowship with the Local Church, any ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the synod.

- (viii) to appoint, in consultation with the Local Church, an interim moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such interim moderator normally being a serving minister or a retired minister. In exceptional circumstances an elder may be appointed;
- (ix) to care for all the churches of the synod ensuring that visits are made at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work.
- (x) to appoint from time to time such number of representatives to the General Assembly (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall determine. This shall include, when possible, at least one representative under the age of 26. As far as possible all appointments shall be made in rotation from local churches.
- (xi) to appoint from time to time the President, Secretary and members of the district council or councils within its boundaries.
- (xii) to appoint to service on synod:
 - (I) United Reformed Church ministers/lay people serving as (a) full-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals, factories, where their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the synod concerned, (b) secretaries and other full-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship;
 - (II) United Reformed Church ministers giving significant oversight to Local Churches, under the general direction of the synod concerned;
 - (III) Ministers, or members of Diaconal Orders, of other churches appointed to serve on behalf of the United Reformed Church in charge of a United Reformed Church or in an ecumenical group including United Reformed Church interests;
 - (IV) Ministers not in pastoral charge who perform duties within the synod in respect of which the synod has some direct responsibility;
- (xiii) to consider and where appropriate appoint to service on synod
 - (I) United Reformed Church ministers/lay people serving as (a) part-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals, factories, where their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the synod concerned, (b) part-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship;
- (xiv) to devise strategies which enable and support the exploration of mission opportunities in the region and to encourage in Local Churches concern for service and a sense of responsibility for the wider work of the Church at home and abroad.
- (xv) to exercise oversight of all ministers falling within any of the categories 2(3) (a), (b), (f) and (g) except moderators of synods who are the responsibility of the General Assembly.
- (xvi) to give oversight to candidates for the ministry and to candidates for any form of full-time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry, determine their eligibility for a call.

Changes to the Basis & Structure

- (xvii) where following initial enquiry either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party the synod considers that a Minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process;
- (xviii) to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals.
- (xix) to accredit and provide support and training for lay preachers and worship leaders and, in consultation with the Local Churches concerned, to give authority for appropriate lay persons to preside at the sacraments. Authorisation for lay persons to preside at the Sacraments in ecumenical areas shall only be given after consultation with the appropriate ecumenical partner, (in most cases the Methodist District)
- (xx) to receive the resignation of ministers and to decide upon appropriate action (see also paragraph 2.5.xviii)
- (xxi) to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the christian common life and witness in each local community, and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships **on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly.**
- (xxii) to decide upon all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings.
- (xxiii) to receive, hear and decide upon references and appeals duly submitted.
- (xxiv) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.

(B) As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, the synod shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this paragraph.

(C) No appeal shall lie against a decision by the synod to refer any case to the Assembly Commission under Function (xv) above.

2.(4) The area meeting of each area of ecumenical co-operation being representative of the Local Churches in that area grouped together for the purposes of fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight and united action shall consist of representatives of all churches engaged in the area of ecumenical co-operation. The United Reformed Church membership of the area meeting in each area of ecumenical co-operation (hereinafter referred to as the United Reformed Church Committee) shall consist of the moderator of synod, all ministers, church related community workers and registered pastors (in Scotland) engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within the area, representatives of Local Churches within the area, and such other persons as determined by the constitution of each area meeting as approved by resolution of the synod.

(A) The synod shall delegate to the area council the following functions, unless by agreement with the relevant ecumenical partner it is felt that some of these functions should be reserved to the synod, and it shall be the responsibility of the Area Council

- (i) to exercise oversight of all ministers falling within any of the categories 2(3)(a), (b), (f) and (g) except moderators of synods who although members of the area council are responsible to the General Assembly;
- (ii) to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers and, with the moderator of the synod or the moderator's deputy presiding, to conduct, in fellowship with the Local Church(es), any ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the district;
- (iii) to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers and church related community workers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals;
- (iv) to appoint, in consultation with the Local Church(es) and the moderator of the synod, an interim moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such interim moderator normally being a serving minister or a retired minister. In exceptional circumstances an elder may be appointed;
- (v) to care for all the churches of the area council and to visit them by deputies at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work;
- (vi) to consider on the recommendation of Local Churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministry and to transmit them, if approved, to the synod for decision;
- (vii) to accredit lay preachers
- (viii) to consider resignations of ministers not currently the subject of any case within the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline referred to in Function (xviii) below and, in consultation with the moderator of the synod, to decide upon appropriate action (see also paragraph 2.4.xviii);
- (ix) from time to time to recommend to synod such number of representatives to the General Assembly as the synod shall determine;
- (x) to engage in study concerning the Church's mission in the region and to encourage in the local churches concern for youth work and social service and a sense of responsibility for the wider work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (xi) to promote church extension within the area and to submit proposals to the synod for the establishing of new causes and the recognition of mission projects;
- (xii) to make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the synod in consultation with the moderator on all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of local churches;
- (xiii) to make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the synod on all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings;

Changes to the Basis & Structure

- (xiv) to provide a forum for concerns brought forward by Local Churches and to advise thereon;
- (xv) to hear and make decisions upon appeals brought forward by Local Churches and church members;
- (xvi) to take appropriate action on matters referred to the council by the synod or General Assembly, and to initiate or transmit proposals for consideration by those bodies;
- (xvii) to maintain contact with ecumenical and missionary work in the area;
- (xviii) where the area council considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process at the appropriate time as specified in that Process.

(D) Such functions as relate solely to the work of the United Reformed Church may be discharged by the United Reformed Church Committee of each area meeting.

5. General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church relating to the General Assembly, by deleting Paragraph 2.(5) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church from its beginning to **"The General Assembly may appoint to any such committee members of the United Reformed Church who are not members of the General Assembly."** and substituting:

2.(5) The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life shall consist of:

- (a) Such number of representatives of synods (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine. These numbers shall be calculated proportionately to the total membership of each synod, as recorded in the year book of the United Reformed Church (at present this calculation shall be such as to produce a total of synod representatives not exceeding 200.)
- (b) among the representatives of synods shall be included at least two from each synod aged 26 or under, at the date of appointment. Should a synod prove unable to make such an appointment it may appoint from another synod but these persons must be 26 or under at the date of appointment.
- (c) The moderators of the General Assembly and of the synods, and such other officers of the General Assembly as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (The Assembly has determined that the Clerk of Assembly, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary shall be members of Assembly.)
- (d) **Where the moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly, a committee convener or otherwise entitled to membership of the Assembly, the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative.**

- (e) The convener of each of the standing committees of the General Assembly;
- (f) A staff representative and a student representative, being members of the United Reformed Church, from each of such recognised theological colleges as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine;
- (g) Such number of representatives from the partner churches of the United Reformed Church outside of Britain and Ireland as the Assembly shall from time to time determine;
- (h) Such other ministers and members of the United Reformed Church as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (the Assembly has added to its membership one serving United Reformed Church chaplain to the forces, nominated each year by the Organising Secretary of the United Board, in consultation with the three Principal Chaplains, six representatives of the synod of Scotland)
- (i) The two most immediate past moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.
- (j) Two former moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, past chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, past presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, former moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, former chairmen or presidents of the Annual Conference of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, former presidents of the Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, provided that such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that they shall have been elected by a college consisting of all such past and former moderators, presidents and chairmen as are members of the United Reformed Church.
- (k) Such number of representatives of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth, being members of the United Reformed Church, as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present two);
- (l) Representatives of other denominations in the United Kingdom as the General Assembly may from time to time determine;
- (m) A representative of the Council for World Mission.
- (n) Such number of Assembly-appointed staff as the General Assembly may from time to time determine.

The General Assembly shall at its biennial meeting elect one Minister of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Worker and one Elder of the United Reformed Church to serve jointly as moderators, and such other officers as it shall from time to time think desirable. (The Assembly has appointed the following to serve as officers with the moderators: the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Clerk of Assembly, The Treasurer and the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.) It shall also appoint a Mission Council with power to act in its name between meetings of the General Assembly and to discharge such other functions as the General Assembly may from time to time direct. The General Assembly shall appoint standing committees which subject to the General Assembly shall have charge of the continuing interests of the church. It may also appoint special committees which subject to the General Assembly shall have charge of such matters as the General Assembly may assign to them from time to time. The General Assembly may appoint to any such committee members of the United Reformed Church who are not members of the General Assembly.

Changes to the Basis & Structure

6. General Assembly resolves to amend the following parts of the Structure of the United Reformed Church relating to Constitutional amendments to read:

Paragraph 3.(1)(c)

The General Assembly shall, if such motion to approve the proposal is passed, refer the proposal to synods and may, if it deems appropriate, in exceptional cases also to local churches.

Paragraph 3(1)(e)

If by such date notice has been received by the General Secretary from more than one third of synods (or, if it has been so referred, more than one third of local churches) that a motion 'that the proposal be not proceeded with' has been passed by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such body, then the Assembly in its concern for the unity of the church shall not proceed to ratify the proposal.

Paragraph 3(1)(h)

For the purposes of this paragraph 3(1), only synods, and Local Churches in existence on the date set for responses to be made shall be counted in the calculations.

7. General Assembly resolves to amend Paragraph 5(2) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church to read:

The procedure for dealing with reference and appeals falling outside paragraph 5(1) is as follows:

A Local Church or any member thereof or elders' meeting may appeal to the synod upon which the Local Church is entitled to be represented for the resolution of any dispute or difference and may appeal from any decision of such synod to the General Assembly.

A synod may refer any dispute or difference, whether or not the same shall have come before it on a reference or appeal, to the General Assembly.

The decision of the General Assembly on any matter which has come before it on reference or appeal shall be final and binding.





Spring Clean 2007

Changes to the Rules of Procedure

General Assembly 2007

Changes to the Rules of Procedure (Manual Section C) required to implement the Catch the Vision Process

The rules of procedure contain various provisions relating the General Assembly, its functions and officers. The move from an annual to a biennial Assembly require that these be changed.

RESOLUTION 25

Changes to the Rules of Procedure

1. General Assembly resolves to amend the Paragraph 1 of the Rules of Procedure to read:

1. General Assembly

1.1 **The Assembly shall meet at least once in every other year. The scheduled meeting in that year, the place and dates of which shall be determined by a preceding Assembly, shall be the Biennial Meeting of the Assembly. At the completion of the business of the Biennial Meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly is adjourned. The members of Assembly at any time between Biennial Meetings of the Assembly remain those who were included on the Roll of Assembly at the constitution of the immediately preceding Biennial Meeting of the Assembly. Any meeting of the Assembly other than the Biennial Meeting shall be a special meeting.**

1.2 **A special meeting of the Assembly may be convened by the Mission Council or by the Moderator of the General Assembly.**

1.3 **All meetings of the Assembly shall be convened and held as provided by these rules. The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of synods, district councils and their committees.**

1.4 **The Roll of Assembly shall be made up by the General Secretary. Synods shall send to the General Secretary, the names and addresses of their representatives to the forthcoming Assembly so as to reach the General Secretary not later than fourteen weeks before the meeting of the Assembly. Any necessary amendments to the list shall be notified to the General Secretary not later than two weeks before the meeting of the Assembly, at which time the roll shall be held to be complete.**

1.5 **When a synod cannot fill all its allotted places at Assembly, its vacant seats may be filled from other synods bearing in mind the need to balance lay and ministerial representation.**

2. General Assembly resolves to amend Paragraph 3 of the Rules of Procedure to read:

3. MODERATOR

3.1 The Moderators of the General Assembly shall be elected by ballot in accordance with these Rules. The Moderators shall serve jointly for two years commencing at the biennial Assembly following the Meeting at which the report of the election is received in accordance with Rule 3.10. The period of office for both shall be deemed to begin with the induction of the Moderators and shall continue until the Moderators's successors are inducted into office.

3.2 The Moderators of the General Assembly shall normally be a minister of word and sacraments or a church related community worker and an Elder of the United Reformed Church but any person who has been admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church and whose name is included on the membership roll of a local church is eligible for nomination.

3.3 Nominations for election as Moderators of the General Assembly shall be made by a synod, the consent of the nominees not being required. These nominations shall be in writing under the hand of the clerk of the synod and received by the General Secretary not later than the 31st March immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly. The synod shall propose one nominee in each category, but the absence of a nomination in either category shall not invalidate the other nomination.

3.4 The General Secretary shall forthwith send to each person nominated a list of the nominations. Any nominee may, within ten days of the receipt of this list, withdraw from nomination by notice in writing to the General Secretary.

3.5 If after 31st March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations either in one or in both categories the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the clerks of the synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated and a brief biography, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15th May.

3.6 If after the period for withdrawal there is only one nomination in either category, this nomination shall be placed before the Assembly and voted upon by secret ballot.

3.7 If the number of those who have been nominated in either category and have not withdrawn is or exceeds two, the election shall be by a secret ballot according to the principle of the single transferable vote. All members of the Assembly shall be entitled to vote. They shall vote by indicating their preference by figures 1, 2, 3 and so forth, but no voting paper shall be invalidated by the absence of alternative choices. If the tellers find that no name has an absolute majority of first choices, the second choices of those who gave as their first choice the name securing the smallest number of such choices shall be added to the first choices for other names. If necessary this process shall continue until one of the names has an absolute majority of votes cast. If the process continues until only two names remain, the person who then has the larger number of votes shall be elected.

Changes to the Rules of Procedure

3.8 Members of the Assembly shall vote by means of a voting paper containing the name, the usual designation and the church of membership, of each of those accepting nomination which shall be sent by the General Secretary by ordinary post to each such member before the commencement of the biennial Meeting of the Assembly. Brief indication of the reasons for the nomination, as supplied by the synod, may be circulated with the ballot paper. The General Assembly may in any case authorise further means of informing the members about those accepting nomination.

3.9 The General Assembly shall vote to elect the Moderators of the Assembly by secret ballot as an item of business following prayer on either the second or third day of the meeting of the Assembly. The ballot boxes shall be delivered to the tellers by whom alone the boxes shall be opened. They shall report the result of the ballot to the Assembly at a later session.

3.10 As soon as the voting papers have been examined and the result of the poll ascertained, the voting papers shall be closed up under the seal of the tellers or any two of them, and shall be retained by the General Secretary for one month after the election, and shall then be destroyed.

3.11 At each biennial Meeting the Assembly shall appoint, upon the nomination of the Nominations Committee, three tellers to be responsible for the ballot for the ensuing Assembly. The counting of the votes cast shall take place in secret under their supervision and control and they shall:

3.11.1 inform the General Secretary of the name of the persons elected and the General Secretary shall thereupon individually inform those nominated whether or not they have been elected.

3.11.2 report to the Assembly the name of the persons elected, the number of papers received and the number of papers which were invalid.

3.12 If any of the tellers appointed by the Assembly shall become incapable of acting the Moderator shall fill any such vacancy or vacancies and report that action to the Assembly.

3.13 Upon receipt of the report of the tellers by the Assembly the persons elected shall thereupon become the duly elected Moderators for the period commencing at the next biennial Meeting of the Assembly.

3. General Assembly resolves to amend Paragraph 6.3 of the Rules of Procedure to read:

6.3 Each synod shall at its discretion be divided into districts (or areas in Scotland) whose number and boundaries the synod shall have power to determine from time to time, all such changes to be reported to the General Assembly.



Convener: Revd Malcolm Hanson [2010]
Secretary: Revd Elizabeth J Brown [2009]
Synod Representatives:

<i>I</i>	Revd Kevin Watson	<i>II</i>	Revd Ruth Wollaston
<i>III</i>	Revd John Oldershaw	<i>IV</i>	Mrs Val Morrison
<i>V</i>	Mrs Irene Wren	<i>VI</i>	Dr Tony Jeans
<i>VII</i>	Revd Elizabeth Caswell/Revd Richard Church		
<i>VIII</i>	Revd Roz Harrison	<i>IX</i>	Mr Peter Pay
<i>X</i>	Mr Adrian West	<i>XI</i>	Dr Graham Campling
<i>XII</i>	Dr Jean Silvan-Evans	<i>XIII</i>	Dr Jim Merrilees

with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary.

This report has been prepared before Assembly has made decisions about structural changes in the light of Catch the Vision. However, since it is anticipated that some committees may go out of existence, some committee members whose terms are due to end at this Assembly are being asked to extend their period of service until further decisions have been made. If structural changes are agreed at this Assembly, some modification of committees will come into effect before next year. (see the Appendix to this Nominations Committee Report, page 111.)

1. ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENTS

1.1 **The Nominating Group**, convened by the Revd Cecil White, recommended the appointment of the Revd Kevin Watson to serve as **Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod** for a period of seven years from 1 February 2008 to 31 January 2015, subject to review before the end of that period.

1.2 **The Nominating Group**, convened by Mrs Irene Wren, recommended the appointment of the Revd Richard Church to serve as **Moderator of the North Western Synod** for a period of seven years from 1 September 2007 to 31 August 2014, subject to review before the end of that period.

1.3 **The Nominating Group**, convened by the Revd Sheila Maxey, recommended the appointment of the Revd Dr Susan Durber as **Principal of Westminster College** for a period of seven years from 1 August 2007 until 31 July 2014, subject to review before the end of this period. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of the General Assembly.

1.4 **The Nominating Group**, convened by the Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, recommended the appointment of the Revd Martin Hazell for the position of **Director of Communications** at Church House from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2011, subject to review before the end of this period. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of the General Assembly.

1.5 **The Review Group** for the post of **Secretary for Education and Learning** at Church House, convened by the Revd Rachel Poolman, recommended the re-appointment of the Revd Roy Lowes from General Assembly 2007 until General Assembly 2012. This was agreed by Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly.

2. MONITORING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (2005 General Assembly Resolutions 16 and 36)

The Committee has consulted with the Equal Opportunities and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries committees in relation to monitoring and equal opportunity issues. A new reply form has been designed for those invited to serve on boards and committees and a form for a skills audit is being prepared. Records are being kept of those approached to serve on committees and monitoring of appointments is taking place. Responses are still being gathered and a first analysis should be available in the summer. A report will be given to Mission Council in October.

3. ASSEMBLY BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

Notes:

1. The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every Standing Committee.
2. Officers and members appointed since Assembly 2006 are indicated by one asterisk (*), two asterisks (**) denotes those whom Assembly 2007 is invited to appoint for the first time (#) indicates a Convener Elect who will become Convener in 2008, the symbol † denotes someone who has been invited to extend his/her period of service.
3. The date in brackets following the names indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
4. Many committees have cross-representation [e.g. the Ecumenical Committee has representatives from Doctrine, Prayer & Worship, Church and Society, Youth and Children's Work etc..] These are internal appointments and are not listed here.
5. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations have been made by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.

3.1 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

Convener: Mr William McVey [2008] #Vacancy (2012)
Secretary: facilities Co-ordinator
Synod Representative for forthcoming Assembly
Synod Representative for previous Assembly who is then replaced after 'review' meeting by
Synod Representative for Assembly two years hence.
Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly

3.1.1 TELLERS AT ASSEMBLY 2008 FOR THE ELECTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MODERATOR(S)

Dr Graham Campling [Convener], Dr Jim Merrilees, Revd John Durrell**

3.2 CHURCH and SOCIETY

Convener: Mr Simon Loveitt [2010]
Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society
Revd David Pickering [2009] Revd Margaret Tait [2009] Mrs Susan Clarke [2010]
Revd Michael Jagessar [2010] Mr Themba Moyo [2010] Mrs Judith Garthwaite**[2011]
Mr Blair Kesseler**[2011]

3.2.1 CHURCH AND SOCIETY – Commitment for Life Sub-Committee

Convener: Mrs Melanie Frew

3.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Revd Kirsty Thorpe [2011]
Secretary: Director of Communications
Revd Paul Snell [2008] Revd Janet Sutton [2008] Ms Julia Wills [2008]
Mrs Valerie Jenkins [2009] Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith [2009]
Mr Ron Sweeney [2009] Mr Richard Lathaen [2009] Mrs Esther Searle ** [2011]
Vacancy [2011]

3.4 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Dr Susan Durber [2009]
Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order
Mrs Chris Eddowes [2008] Revd Jason McCullagh [2008]
Revd Peter Trow [2008] Revd Gordon Smith [2009]
Miss Suzanne McDonald [2009] Revd Lance Stone ** [2011]
Ms Christine Chalstrey ** [2011] Revd Ruth Dillon ** [2011]
Revd Ruth Crofton ** [2011] Mr Mark Argent ** [2011]
Mr Malcolm Townsend ** [2011]

Nominations

3.5 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Nash [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order

Revd Graham Maskery [2009] Revd Anthony Howells [2009] Revd Sarah Moore [2010]

Mr David Barber [2010] Miss Isobel Simmons** [2011]

Mrs Margaret Gateley ** [2011]

Revd Stuart Jackson representing the National Synod of Wales

Revd Mary Buchanan representing the National Synod of Scotland

3.5.1 ECUMENICAL – International Exchange Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Linda Elliott [2011]

Secretary: Secretary for International Relations

Mrs Sylvia Jackson [2009] Revd Nigel Uden [2010] Dr Harry Potter [2010]

Dr Pamela Cressey [2010] Revd Philip Gray ** [2011] *Vacancy* [2011]

3.6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Ms Morag McLintock [2010]

Secretary: Revd Derek Hopkins [2008]

Dr Ruth Shepherd [2008] Revd Kate Gartside [2009] Revd John Macaulay [2010]

Revd Pam Ward [2010] Mr Jim Hurst [2010] *Vacancy* [2011]

3.7 FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Chief Finance Officer: Mr Andrew Grimwade

Mr Errol Martin [2008] Mr Graham Law [2008] Revd Dick Gray [2009]

Mr Graham Morris [2009] Mr John Kidd [2009] Revd Kathryn Taylor [2010]

Mrs Jane Humphreys ** [2011] *Vacancy* [2011] Chairman of the Trustees

3.8 INTER FAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Revd Peter Colwell [2011]

Secretary: Mrs Jean Potter [2008]

Dr Iain Frew [2008] Revd Helen Pollard [2008] Mr David Jonathan [2009]

Revd Tim Clarke [2010]

3.9 LIFE and WITNESS

Convener: Revd Peter Ball [2010]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary *pro tem*

Mrs Sheila Brain † [2008] Mr Colin Ferguson † [2011] Revd Ian Fosten † [2011]

Revd Kate Gray [2008] Mr Emmanuel Nkusi [2008] Revd Simon Walkling [2009]

Mr Patrick Smyth [2009] Revd Patricia Davis [2010]

3.9.1 LIFE and WITNESS – Stewardship Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Ray McHugh [2008]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary *pro tem*

Mrs Jackie Haws † [2008] Mrs Susan Wilkinson † [2008] Revd John Durrell [2008]

Mr Gareth Curl [2009] Revd Sarah Simpson [2010]

3.9.2 WINDERMERE ADVISORY GROUP

Convener: Revd Bernard Collins [2009]

Secretary: The Director of the Windermere Centre

Mrs Irene Wren [2008] Revd Carole Allison [2009] Revd Jan Berry [2009]

Convener of Windermere Management Committee

Convener of Life and Witness Committee

Representative of Carver URC

Nominations

3.12 PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Alasdair Pratt [2011]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd Meryl Court [2008] Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith [2009]

Mrs Delyth Rees [2011] Revd Adrian Bulley ** [2011]

[*ex officio*: The Treasurer, The General Secretary, The Secretary for Welfare]

3.13 RACIAL JUSTICE and MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Convener: Revd Carla Grosch Miller [2011]

Secretary: Secretary for Racial Justice

Revd Helga Cornell [2008] Mrs Pat Poinen [2009] Revd Rosemary Tusting [2009]

Dr Ben Makepeace [2010] Mrs Heather Al-Jawad ** [2011]

Revd Naison Hove ** [2011]

3.14 EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Convener: Professor Malcolm Johnson [2011]

Secretary: The Secretary for Education and Learning

Revd Rachel Poolman [2008] Revd Richard Church [2008] Revd Dr John Campbell [2009]

Mr John Saunders [2009] Revd John Smith [2010] Revd Ruth Allen [2010]

Mr Clive Parsons [2010] Mrs Carol Durose ** [2011]

Revd Dr Robert Pope ** [2011]

3.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Neil Thorogood [2010]

Secretary: Revd Steven Faber [2008]

Revd Tim Meachin [2008] Revd Sian Collins [2009] Revd Robert Weston [2009]

Miss Rosemary Simmons [2009] Ms Ruth Hezlett [2009] Mrs Rita Griffiths [2009]

Revd Heather Whyte [2010] Mrs Anthea Coates ** [2011] Mr Chris Gill ** [2011]

FURY Chair FURY Council Member

3.15.1 PILOTS MANAGEMENT Sub Committee

Convener: *Vacancy*

Member: Mrs Denise Beckley [2010]

[Other members of the sub-committee are appointed by the Youth and Children's Work Committee. The Congregational Federation also has two representatives.]

3.16 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS – Commission Panel

Convener: Mrs Helen Brown [2009]

Deputy Convener: Miss Kathleen Cross

Secretary: Mrs Wilma Frew [2011]

Members:

Mr Martin Ballard	Miss Ina Barker †	Revd Wendy Baskett
Revd David Bedford	Revd James Bolton	Revd Jim Brown
Revd Ken Chippindale †	Mr Des Colechin	Revd Meryl Court
Mr Derek Craig	Miss Kathleen Cross	Revd Alison Davis †
Revd John Du Bois †	Mr David Eldridge	Revd Joan Grindod-Helmn †
Mr Peter Jolly	Mrs Barbara Lancaster	Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC †
Revd Nanette Lewis-Head	Dr Fiona Liddell	Revd Julian Macro †
Mrs Barbara Madge	Revd Nicholas Mark	Mrs Jean McAslan
Dr Jim Merrilees	Mr Geoff Milnes	Revd David Pattie
Revd Sandra Pickard	Revd Shelagh Pollard	Mr Nicholas Pye †
Mr Neil Robinson	Mrs Pamela Sharp	Revd Raymond Singh †
Mr Alan Small	Mr Patrick Smyth	Revd Yvonne Stone
Revd Dr David Thompson †	Mrs Lynne Upsdell	Ms Elizabeth Whitten
Revd Joan Winterbottom	Mr Ken Woods	Revd Colin Offor **
Mr David Westwood **	Revd Nick Adlem **	<i>Three vacancies</i>

3.17 PANEL FOR THE APPOINTMENT AND REVIEW OF SYNOD MODERATORS

Mrs Sally Abbott, Revd Mary Buchanan, Revd Craig Bowman, Mrs Helen Brown, Dr Graham Campling, Revd Lesley Charlton, Revd Dr Susan Durber, Dr Jean Silvan Evans, Mrs Janet Gray, Mr Alun Jones, Revd Nanette Lewis-Head, Mr John Lumsden, Mr Okeke Azu Okeke, Mr Simon Rowntree, Revd Raymond Singh, Mr Ron Todd, Revd Cecil White, Mrs Irene Wren

4. MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the synod Moderators and three representatives from each synod together with the Conveners of Assembly Committees.

Northern Synod	Revd John Durell, Miss Elaine Colechin, Mr Mike Louis
North Western Synod	Miss Kathleen Cross, Revd Alan Wickens, Revd Rachel Poolman
Mersey Synod	Revd Jennifer Morgan, Mr Donald Swift, (<i>Vacancy</i>)
Yorkshire Synod	Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Roderick Garthwaite
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Irene Wren, Mrs Margaret Gateley, Revd Jane Campbell
West Midlands Synod	Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson, Mrs Adella Pritchard
Eastern Synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Joan Turner, Revd Cecil White
South Western Synod	Revd Roz Harrison, Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Richard Pope
Wessex Synod	Revd Ruth Whitehead, Mr Peter Pay, Revd Cliff Bembridge
Thames North Synod	Revd John Macaulay, Mr David Eldridge, Revd David Varcoe
Southern Synod	Dr Graham Campling, Mrs Maureen Lawrence, Mr Nigel MacDonald
National Synod of Wales	Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Liz Tadd, Mrs Barbara Shapland
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Revd Alan Paterson, Mr Patrick Smyth

5. TRUST BODIES

5.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Chairman: (*To be appointed from and by the Trustees*)

Secretary: (*To be appointed by the Trustees*)

Trustees:

Miss Joyce Bain ** [2010]	Mr Ernest Gudgeon [2010]	Dr Brian Woodhall ** [2010]
Mr John Ellis [2011]	Mrs Val Morrison ** [2012]	Dr Augur Pearce ** [2012]
Mr Alan Small [2012]	Revd Dr David Thompson [2012]	
Miss Rachel Greening ** [2014]	Dr David Robinson ** [2014]	
Mr John Woodman ** [2014]	Co-opted Trustee: Revd Michael J Davies ** [2010]	
[<i>ex officio</i> : Moderator of General Assembly **, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary **]		

5.2 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD

BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman: Mr Brian Moere

Secretary: *to be advised*

Members of URC:

Mr Brian Moere [2008] Mr Michael Goldsmith [2009]

Mrs Hilary Reynolds [2011] Mr Andrew Perkins [2011]

Members of Fund:

Revd Michael Davies [2008] Revd Graham Spicer [2009]

Revd Ivor Rees [2011] *Vacancy* [2012]

[*ex officio*: Honorary Treasurer, Convener Investment Committee, Convener MoM Sub-Committee, Convener Pensions Executive]

5.2.1 PENSIONS EXECUTIVE

Convener: Mr Maurice Dyson [2010]

The Pensions Executive reports to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pensions Trust Board, the Maintenance of Ministry Sub Committee and to the Finance Committee.

5.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Revd Dr Peter Jupp

Mr Hartley Oldham

Mr Graham Stacy

Dr John Thompson

Dr Elaine Kaye

Dr Brian Woodhall

Nominations

5.4 THE AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER SERVICES CHARITABLE TRUST

Mr Clem Frank

Mr Brian Wates – joint appointment with Uniting Church in Australia

6. REPRESENTATIVES of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH to MEETINGS of SISTER CHURCHES

Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Revd Elizabeth Caswell
General Synod of Church of England	Revd Graham Maskery
Methodist Conference	Revd Jason Askew
Congregational Federation	Revd Stuart Jackson
General Assembly of Church of Scotland [note 5]	Revd Elizabeth Caswell, Revd Neil Thorogood, Revd Mary Buchanan, Revd Mitchell Bunting Revd John Humphreys
United Free Church of Scotland [note 5]	Revd Mary Buchanan
Scottish Episcopal Church [note 5]	<i>To be decided</i>
Methodist Church in Scotland [note 5]	Revd Stuart Jackson
Baptist Union of Scotland [note 5]	Revd Keith Jones
Presbyterian Church of Wales [note 5]	Revd Stuart Jackson
Union of Welsh Independents [note 5]	Revd David Bunney
Church in Wales Governing Board [note 5]	
Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church	

7. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH ON ECUMENICAL CHURCH BODIES

The following have been nominated as URC representatives at the major gatherings of the Ecumenical Bodies listed.

Note: A list of representatives to other ecumenical bodies, commissions and committees, co-ordinating groups and agencies, who are appointed by the relevant committees, will be distributed to all members of General Assembly. Additional copies are available, on request, from the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

7.1 Council for World Mission (CWM) Assembly 2006

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Ann Shillaker, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith (CWM Trustee),
Secretary for International Relations

7.1.1 CWM European Region Meeting 2005 - 2008

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Ann Shillaker, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith,
Secretary for International Relations, Deputy General Secretary (CWM Europe Trustee)

7.2 World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) General Council

Ms Sarah Hall, Ms Emma Pugh, Revd Dr David Pickering, Secretary for International
Relations, General Secretary

7.3 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Church Leaders' Meeting

The Moderator of General Assembly

7.3.1 CTBI Senior Representatives' Forum

General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

7.3.2 CTBI – Environmental Issues Network

Revd David Coaker, Revd Dr David Pickering

7.3.3 CTBI – Church and Society Forum

Mr Stuart Dew, Mr Simon Loveitt

7.3.4 CTBI Churches' Criminal Justice Forum

Mrs Wilma Frew

7.4 Churches Together in England (CTE) Forum 2006

Miss Alison Micklem, Revd Peter Poulter, Revd Andrew Prasad, Mrs Helen Renner, Revd Elizabeth Nash, Mrs Wilma Frew, Mr Stuart Dew, Mr John Brown, Dr Suzanne McDonald, General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

7.4.1 CTE – Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

7.4.2 CTE – Coordinating Group for Local Unity

Revd Terry Oakley, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

7.4.3 CTE – Churches Together for Healing

Revd Delia Bond, Revd Deborah McVey

7.4.4 CTE – Women's Coordinating Group

Revd Samantha White

7.4.5 CTE – Churches' Committee on Funerals and Crematoria

Revd Delia Bond, Revd Sally Thomas

7.4.6 CTE – Free Churches' Education Committee

Mr Graham Handscomb, Mrs Gillian Kingston

7.4.7 CTE – Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee

Mr Graham Handscomb

7.5 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Forum [see Note 5]

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mary Buchanan

7.6 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland [see note 5]

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mary Buchanan

7.7 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN) [see Note 5]

Revd Peter Noble

7.7.1 Commission of Covenanted Churches [see note 5]

Revd Peter Noble, Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Ann Shillaker

7.8 Free Church Council for Wales [see Note 5]

Revd Peter Noble, Revd Stuart Jackson

8. UNITED REFORMED CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES AT FORMAL BI-LATERAL AND MULTI-LATERAL COMMITTEES.

8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee

Revd Roberta Rominger, Revd Barbara Bennett, Revd Kay Alberg, Miss Emma Pugh, Revd Peter Rand (co-opted), Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

8.2 Roman Catholic – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue

Revd Dr David Thompson, Revd Dr John Bradbury, Revd Dr Sarah Hall, Mrs Ann Shillaker, Mr Malcolm Townsend, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Nominations

8.3 Church of England – United Reformed Church Bilateral Dialogue (God's Reign and our Unity)

Revd Elizabeth Welch, Revd Dr David Peel, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

8.4 Anglican/Moravian Contact Groups

Revd David Tatem

8.5 Tri-lateral Conversation of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church

Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mary Buchanan, Revd John Young

9. URC REPRESENTATIVES ON GOVERNING BODIES OF THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES, ETC.

9.1 Mansfield College:

Ministerial and Educational Training Committee: Revd Fiona Thomas [2009]
Revd Nigel Appleton [2010]
Convener of the Education and Learning Committee
Secretary for Education and Learning

9.2 New College London

Foundation Trustees:
Mr Graham Stacy † [2011]
Mr Philip Wade † [2011]
alternate Mr Colin Howard [2008]
Mr John Smethers [2009]

9.3 Northern College

Luther King House Educational Trust

Secretary for Education and Learning [2009]
Revd David Jenkins [2009]
Mr Bill McLaughlin [2009]
Miss Margaret Atkinson [2011]
Mrs Helen Brown [2011]
Revd Dr Robert Pope [2011]
Secretary for Education and Learning

9.4 Westminster College: Board of Governors

Convener: Revd Dr David Thompson [2008]
Clerk: Revd Cecil White
#Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms**[2014]
Revd Craig Muir [2009]
Mr John Kidd [2009]
Mr Brian Long [2010]
Revd Fleur Houston [2010]
(Vacancy) [2013]
Secretary for Education and Learning

9.4.1 Cheshunt Foundation

Mr David Butler
(Vacancy)

9.4.2 Cambridge Theological Federation

Convener Westminster College Governors

9.5 Homerton College Trustees	Lady Sally Williams † [2010] Revd Dr David Thompson [2008] Mr John Chaplin [2009] Mrs Elisabeth Jupp [2010]
9.6 Queen's College, Birmingham	Revd Elizabeth Welch, Mr Simon Rowntree Secretary for Education and Learning in attendance
10 GOVERNORS OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS WITH WHICH THE URC IS ASSOCIATED	
10.1 Caterham School	Revd Nigel Uden † [2011]
10.2 Eltham College	<i>Vacancy [2011]</i>
10.3 Walthamstow Hall	Mrs Margaret Abraham
10.4 Milton Mount Foundation	Mr Graham Rolfe [2008] Mr Brian West [2008] Revd Nicola Furley-Smith [2008] Ms Hilary Miles [2010] Revd David Cuckson † [2010]
10.5 Silcoates School	Prof Clyde Binfield † [2011] Dr Peter Clarke [2009] Dr Moira Gallagher [2009] Mrs Valerie Jenkins [2009] Mrs Val Morrison [2010] Revd Alan F T Evans [2010]
10.6 Taunton School	Revd David Grosch-Miller
10.7 Wentworth College	Revd Daphne Hull
10.8 Bishops Stortford College	Mr Anthony Trigg [2011]
11 MISCELLANEOUS:	
The URC is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:	
Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund	Mr Ken Meekison Mrs Jill Strong Revd Julian Macro
Christian Education Board of Trustees Publications Development Group	Mrs Patricia Hubbard Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Churches Main Committee	The General Secretary Mr Hartley Oldham
Congregational Fund Board	Revd Margaret Taylor Revd Eric Allen Mr Anthony Bayley † [2011] Revd David Helyar † [2011] <i>Vacancy [2011]</i>

Nominations

Guides' Religious Advisory Panel	Mrs Susan Walker
Samuel Robinson's Charities	Mr Tony Alderman
Scouts' Religious Advisory Group	Revd David Marshall-Jones
United Reformed Church History Society	Mrs Mary Davies Revd Michael Hopkins Revd Kirsty Thorpe Revd Dr David Thompson Dr David Robinson ** [2011]
Wharton Trust	Dr John Thompson [2009]

RESOLUTION 26

Appointment of the Moderator for Yorkshire Synod

General Assembly appoints the Revd Kevin Watson to serve as Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod for a period of seven years from 1 February 2008 until 31 January 2015, subject to review before the end of that period.

RESOLUTION 27

Appointment of the Moderator for North Western Synod

General Assembly appoints the Revd Richard Church to serve as Moderator of the North Western Synod for a period of seven years from 1 September 2007 until 31 August 2014, subject to review before the end of that period.

RESOLUTION 28

Nominations

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 99–109 of the Book of Reports subject to additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary report before Assembly.



APPENDIX to the REPORT of the NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE:

Provisional proposals being brought before the General Assembly under the Catch the Vision process will result in changes in the committee structure along the following lines:

The central work of the Church will be grouped in three "Departments" as follows:

I Ministries Department

(including training and youth and children's work)

within which the following committees will continue largely as at present and will continue with their present remits, membership and relationships –

- 3.9.2 Windermere Advisory Group
- 3.10 Ministries Committee
- 3.10.1 Ministries – Accreditation Sub-Committee
- 3.10.2 Ministries – CRCW Programme Sub-Committee
- 3.10.3 Ministries – Leadership in Worship Sub-Committee
- 3.10.4 Ministries – Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee
- 3.10.5 Ministries – Retired Ministers' Housing Sub-Committee
- 3.10.6 Assessment Board
- 3.14 Education and Learning Committee
- 3.15 Youth and Children's Work Committee
- 3.15.1 Pilots Management Sub-Committee
- 3.16 Disciplinary Process – Commission Panel

There will be no departmental structure as such; the work of the committees will be coordinated through the General Secretariat.

II Administration and Resources Department

within which the following committees will continue largely as at present and will continue with their present remits, membership and relationships –

- 3.1 Assembly Arrangements Committee
- 3.3 Communications and Editorial Committee
- 3.5.1 Ecumenical – International Exchange sub-committee*
- 3.6 Equal Opportunities Committee
- 3.7 Finance Committee
- 3.9.1 Life and Witness – Stewardship sub-committee
[or subsumed into Finance, and/or change of name?]
- 3.11 Nominations Committee
- 3.12 Pastoral Reference Committee
- 3.12.1 Pastoral Welfare sub-committee
- 3.17 Panel for the appointment and review of synod moderators

There will be no departmental structure as such; the work of the committees will be coordinated through the General Secretariat.

* Some committees, such as this one, are inter-departmental in nature.

III Mission Department

The work of the Department will be coordinated by a Mission Committee. This Committee will oversee work previously done by the following committees –

Ecumenical	3.5
Life and Witness	3.9
Church and Society	3.2
Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry	3.13
Doctrine, Prayer and Worship	3.4
Interfaith Relations	3.8

(though this is now a joint committee with the Methodist Church)

Much of the work previously done by these committees will continue to be done by the executive secretaries under the direction of the Mission Committee.

There will be two Reference Groups reporting to the Mission Committee –

- Faith and Order Reference Group [membership, remit and size still to be determined by Mission Council]
- Commitment for Life Reference Group [continuing as at present]

It is envisaged that the membership of the Mission Committee will be representative of the synods. Names and detailed proposals will be brought either to General Assembly or to Mission Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John".

The Committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of General Assembly, for ensuring that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, the safe custody of assets and the preparation of financial statements, for giving financial advice to other councils of the Church as appropriate, and for taking such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr Eric Chilton (Honorary Treasurer)

Chief Finance Officer: Mr Andrew Grimwade

Revd David Dones, Mr John Ellis (Honorary Treasurer from 2007),

Revd Richard Gray, Mr John Kidd, Mr Graham Law, Mr Errol Martin,

Mr Graham Morris, Revd Kathryn Taylor, Revd John Waller (Convener United Reformed Church Trust), Mrs Marie Whitman, Mr John Woodman (co-opted).

1. Our remit

1.1 Our remit has been reviewed following the introduction of the revised governance arrangements and the appointment of the new Trustee body. A new remit has been agreed with the Trustees and Mission Council. A resolution is being brought to General Assembly as part of the Mission Council report.

(Pages 115–116, Resolution 32)

1.2 We believe that this remit will enable the Finance Committee to play a more effective role in the life of the Church. It should also ensure that the more demanding requirements brought about by changes in charity law and accounting standards are met.

2. Personalia

2.1 We continue to be well served by the members of the Finance Committee. This year we particularly thank Eric Chilton, David Dones and Marie Whitman who have completed their term of service. We also wish to thank John Woodman who continued to assist the committee for a further two years when his term of service was completed; this enabled the committee to issue updated guidance to churches on their accounts.

2.2 We are again indebted to our staff for their work during another year of considerable change. The introduction of the new computerised accounts system is now providing added benefits to budget holders and giving greater budgetary control.

2.3 Last year we reported that we had not immediately replaced the Financial Secretary. By work reallocation and the dedication of the staff we have been able to save this post. This has resulted in a substantial reduction in the budget for the Finance Office.

RESOLUTION 29**Trustee's Report and Annual Accounts**

General Assembly receives the Trustee's Report and adopts the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2006.

1. 2006 Accounts

1.1 The Trustee's Report includes a Financial Review and Accounts for the year. These comment on the results for the year and the financial position as at 31 December 2006.

RESOLUTION 30**Appointment of Auditors**

General Assembly resolves that PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP be appointed auditors of the United Reformed Church, to hold office until the conclusion of the next meeting at which accounts are laid before General Assembly and that their remuneration be fixed by the Finance Committee.

1. Appointment of auditors

1.1 The United Reformed Church is required to appoint auditors at each General Assembly at which accounts are laid before the members. The auditors are appointed from the conclusion of the forthcoming General Assembly until the conclusion of next year's General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 31**The giving of the members of the Church to central funds**

General Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 2006 to the Ministry and Mission Fund and the work of the local church, district and synod treasurers.

1. The giving of the members of the Church to central funds

1.1 The financial operation of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration could not happen if each Church Treasurer did not make very great efforts to ensure that the money required for this part of the work is in the local bank account on the 20th of each month, for collection by direct debit.

1.2 That this system runs very smoothly is evidence of much hard and devoted work, and in thanking the Church for its response to the appeal for Ministry and Mission, the committee would also wish to acknowledge that largely unthanked group, the treasurers, in local churches, and also at district and synod level.

1.3 It is recognised that, with the demise of districts, considerable changes have to be made within synods to arrange for the collection of contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund. The committee wish to acknowledge the additional work and responsibilities which have been and will be undertaken at this time.

Document 7

1.1 The present remit, which states that

"The committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of General Assembly, for ensuring that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, the safe custody of assets and the preparation of financial statements, for giving financial advice to other councils of the Church as appropriate, and for taking such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly"

does not properly reflect the work now undertaken by the Committee.

1.2 First, in 2004 the Committee assumed the responsibilities previously given to the Resources Planning Advisory Group of the Mission Council. These included long term planning and the control of the budgetary process. These additional tasks have not yet been reflected in the remit.

1.3 Second, the setting up of the new arrangements for the Charity Trustees has also changed its role. The regular key tasks of the Trustees are the Annual Audit, the agreement of the Budget in conjunction with Mission Council, and Risk Management. In these tasks the Trustees are assisted by the Finance Committee.

1.4 Although the Committee is responsible to General Assembly, there are occasions where its work is complementary to or in support of the Trustees or other Committees as they fulfil their responsibilities, especially in the security of assets; long-term financial planning; budget control monitoring; appraisal of business cases; assessing, monitoring and managing risk and in particular its financial implications; compliance with charity legislation generally but with particular regard to finance; compliance with generally accepted accounting practice, best governance and general financial advice as appropriate.

1.5 The Finance Committee is appointed by and accountable to General Assembly, with nominations for Committee membership being proposed by the Nominations Committee, in consultation with the Finance Committee.

1.6 The following revised remit is, therefore, proposed to reflect the Committee's present role:

"The Finance Committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church, its long-term financial planning, and the preparation and control of its budget under the authority of Mission Council and the Trustees.

The Committee will ensure that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, controlling and monitoring the budgetary process, and the preparation of financial statements in compliance with applicable United Kingdom law and accounting standards. To this end the Committee should expect to liaise with auditors at least once per annum.

The Committee may take such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly".

RESOLUTION 32

Revised remit of the Finance Committee

(Report page 49 para 5.8 and Document 7 on page 115)

General Assembly agrees the revised remit for the Finance Committee (as set out in Document 7).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. G. Smith".

1. The Committee continues to meet regularly three times a year but urgent matters requiring attention between meetings are dealt with by the Officers as they occur and action reported to the Committee.
2. Much of our work concerns the **needs of ministers and pastorate** who find themselves with personal, health or work-related problems. Sometimes these needs can be helped by financial assistance from our Welfare Funds. In all cases the committee works confidentially with people and situations which have been referred to it in accordance with its terms of reference and in close liaison with the synod Moderators who are directly concerned.
3. We live in stressful times and ministers are by no means immune from pressure. We have spent some time considering the reasons for **stress in the ministry** and we commissioned a series of four articles in *Reform* in the first four months of 2006, addressing some of the factors: change, workload, finance, conflict, sustaining spirituality. We hope these articles went some way to helping ministers and congregations affected by these issues.
4. In May 2006 the Mission Council commissioned a report on sexual ethics within the United Reformed Church entitled ***Preserving the Integrity of the Body***. We were asked to study this document with particular reference to ministers who are diagnosed as mentally ill or disordered so that all involved might better understand the nature of such illness and how to approach it. We will continue this work.
5. **The Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service** continues its invaluable work serving ministers and church-related community workers, retired ministers, ministers' widow(er)s, estranged spouses and those training for the ministry and their families. 56 ministers and/or members of their immediate families took up this opportunity between General Assembly 2005, when we last reported, and February 2007. We commend this service to those in need of such support. We also commend **Broken Rites** to those in need of the help it can offer – an interdenominational group offering support and information to the separated and divorced spouses of ministers.
6. Reducing funds available for welfare purposes, as mentioned in our last report to General Assembly two years ago, have obliged us to make changes to the payment of **grants for the costs of post-secondary school education**. Grants are currently paid for a first degree course together with a supplementary short course designed to enable a person to seek employment – e.g. a PGCE in the case of those planning to teach. As far as grants already agreed are concerned, where there is no entitlement to children's allowance any application for a future academic year will be restricted to £150 net. Where there is entitlement to children's allowance any application for a future academic year will attract a grant of £370 net. Grants already agreed will be honoured until the child is financially independent or attains the age of 24. We regret that no new applications for such grants can now be entertained. Grants for school uniform, equipment, musical instruments and travel costs will continue to be paid where there is eligibility for children's allowances.
7. For many years the Pastoral Reference Committee has devolved its specific welfare work to its Welfare Sub-Committee. Increasingly, however, we have found that the different aspects of our agenda overlap. For the past year, therefore, we have met as one committee for the consideration of all matters referred to us. This has worked well. We therefore propose to General Assembly that the Welfare Sub-Committee be dissolved as such and its responsibilities transferred directly to the main committee, and that the membership of the committee and sub-committee be combined. We further propose that, in order

to reflect these changes, the name of the committee be changed to 'The Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee'. Within this revised structure we envisage that the Deputy General Secretary will continue to act as secretary for pastoral matters and that Mrs Judy Stockings will continue to act as secretary for welfare matters.

8. **Personalia**

At General Assembly Keith Forecast comes to the end of his period of service as Convener. Keith has brought a wisdom based on his considerable knowledge of the Church and a deep pastoral concern to this role. Alan Wharton also completes his service as Convener of the Welfare Sub-Committee. He has given careful and thoughtful leadership in this sensitive and confidential area of Assembly work. The committee wishes to record its thanks to both Conveners.

RESOLUTION 33

Pastoral Reference Committee

- a) General Assembly thanks and discharges the Welfare Sub-Committee of the Pastoral Reference Committee and directs that its responsibilities be discharged directly by the Pastoral Reference Committee.
- b) General Assembly resolves that the Pastoral Reference Committee be known as The Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee.



1. We seek to demonstrate the relevance of our faith to the world today, through involvement in issues of equality and justice; by petitioning those in power, and by energising and affirming local congregations. We are now able to do that more effectively by pooling expertise and resources with Baptist and Methodist colleagues in a Joint Public Issues Team.
 - We have been able, together, to establish a higher national profile, through joint news releases, radio and television appearances, submissions and briefings.
2. Baptists, Methodists and the United Reformed Church all oppose the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons programme. This allowed us to speak clearly, both before and after the House of Commons vote.
 - We said renewal of Trident would send the wrong message to aspiring nuclear powers. We encouraged church members to write to their MP.
3. Government sought views on whether sentenced prisoners should be allowed to vote in elections.
 - We said 'Yes'. We believe it would encourage personal responsibility and would symbolically offer inclusion to a socially excluded group.
4. The Commission on Cohesion and Integration asked what could be done to help different communities live in harmony.
 - We gave examples of churches helping to make this happen, but we warned that cohesion and integration must not mean assimilation.
5. We help run an informal ecumenical meeting of church staff involved in political affairs. With Baptist, Methodist, Quaker and Salvation Army representatives, we attended the three main political party conferences, meeting Christian MPs and hosting fringe meetings.
 - We found Christian politicians to be grateful for the prayerful support of our churches.
6. As the Church and Society committee, we have called the United Reformed Church to debate the sensitive issue of Assisted Dying. Our report and recommendations to General Assembly are contained in a separate document, with a study guide for those attending Assembly and a more user-friendly version will be available later in the year.
 - We were hugely encouraged by the response to a questionnaire, with many people offering perspectives born out of difficult personal experience. We hope the discussion will continue in small groups at Assembly.
7. We have helped publicise the 200th anniversary of the Act ending British involvement in the slave trade. (**resolution 35, page 125**)
 - We have asked: What social ills exist today, which should prompt us to speak out? One is clearly sex trafficking, a modern form of slavery.

8. In the fast moving field of climate change, we have worked with Commitment for Life and International Relations to bring a resolution which will require us to develop a plan to reduce our harmful carbon emissions. (**Document 3 – Global Warming/ Climate Change**)

- We will be asking local churches and church members: What can you do to be more environmentally friendly?

9. Should local churches be allowed to apply for Heritage Lottery funding for the upkeep of listed buildings? We prepared a paper for Mission Council which will come to Assembly. (**Document 1 – Heritage Lottery Funding**)

- This could produce an interesting exchange of views at Assembly. Gambling is a social evil and the lottery is gambling versus the lottery is now so much part of society that we harm ourselves un-necessarily by ignoring the funding opportunities it provides.

10. We are delighted when synods or local churches invite us to speak about, or join a discussion on, any of these issues. Contact us at church.society@urc.org.uk

11. We have close working links with bodies across the social justice field, and record our thanks to the many people who give their time to represent us.

- Asylum: an informal ecumenical group with a concern for asylum seekers. c/o church.society@urc.org.uk
- Criminal Justice: Churches Criminal Justice Forum www.ccjf.org and Prisons Week www.prisonsweek.org
- Education: Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee and Free Church Education Committee www.churches-together.net See our work > education.
- Environment: Creation Challenge www.creationchallenge.org.uk , Operation Noah www.operationnoah.org and CTBI Environmental Issues Network Contact www.ctbi.org.uk
- Ethical Investment Advisory Group c/o church.society@urc.org.uk
- Funerals Group c/o church.society@urc.org.uk
- Healing: URC Health and Healing Network c/o church.society@urc.org.uk and Churches Together for Healing www.churches-together.net See our work > healthcare
- HIV/AIDS Working Group (URC) c/o church.society@urc.org.uk
- Housing Justice www.housingjustice.org.uk
- Peace Fellowship (URC) c/o church.society@urc.org.uk
- Poverty: Church Action on Poverty info@church-poverty.org.uk

For more Church and Society information, go to www.urc.org.uk and click on Our Work and Church and Society.



Address to the Throne

General Assembly 2007

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty. The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, meeting in Manchester, sends its greetings.

Earlier this year, our Moderator of General Assembly and other representatives were present with Your Majesty at Westminster Abbey, to mark the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. However, our pleasure at being part of that commemoration was qualified by our concern that slavery still exists in many forms. Child labour, forced marriage, the employment of immigrant workers in poor conditions, and the trafficking of women and girls for prostitution are all manifestations of this. We welcome the higher priority now given to these issues by Your Majesty's government and suggest that work done in Italy and Sweden in addressing demand for trafficked prostitutes, might be used to inform good practice.

We are also conscious of the grave humanitarian consequences of the policies of Your Majesty's Government in respect of those people whose applications for asylum in the United Kingdom have been turned down. Unable to return to their country of origin through a well-founded fear of persecution, large numbers of men and women are forced into destitution. Our Christian faith teaches us the fundamental importance of treating all God's people with respect and dignity. Our General Assembly has declared us to be a Multicultural Church, recognising the importance of the contribution we are making in the areas of Inter Faith Relations and Multicultural Ministry.

During the past year, together with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Methodist Church, we have expressed our opposition to renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons programme. We live in an uncertain world, but we believe Britain's chances of reversing the proliferation of nuclear weapons will not be helped by Your Majesty's government further developing nuclear capabilities. There are other, more effective, ways of improving security, and many other demands on the billions of pounds that the new deterrent will cost.

We remain concerned about the conflict in Iraq and, increasingly, by the suffering endured by the people of that country and the danger to which British military personnel are exposed. We contrast the involvement of Your Majesty's government and the American administration in Iraq, with the less energetic attention given to conflicts elsewhere, for instance in Israel/Palestine, Darfur and Zimbabwe, where Britain might use its influence more constructively. We pray for reconciliation, and for a just and lasting peace, in these theatres of conflict.

We applaud the decision of Your Majesty's government to take a lead in addressing climate change. We entirely support the statement in the draft Climate Change Bill, when it says: *The UK ... is clearly unable to address the global problem of climate change alone. However, this should not be used as an excuse for not taking further action.* We wish to play our part in being good stewards of God's creation and will be developing plans to monitor carbon emissions across the Church, and to implement cuts, year on year.

We are sure it saddens Your Majesty, as it saddens us, that in this, the 55th year of Your Majesty's reign, the gap between the richest and the poorest in the land is as wide as it was in 1953. The facts are harsh: our country has one of the worst rates of child poverty in the industrialised world, a child from a poor family is more likely to die in infancy than a child of a rich family, and around ten million people (two million of them pensioners) live in poverty. This situation exists in Britain, not the developing World. In 2008, the United Reformed Church will embark upon a campaign, led by Church Action on Poverty, with the ambitious target of creating a just and fair society, free from poverty in all its forms. We believe it is entirely what Christ himself would ask of us, his followers.

We have the assurance that our Christian faith will sustain us in answering our calling. We pray that Your Majesty's own faith will continue to be both strengthening and sustaining in the year to come.

Catching the Multicultural Vision

1.1 The multicultural vision, if anything, is precisely about ...*being Christ's people...transformed by the Gospel...making a difference in the world...*

And we seek to *infect* the United Reformed Church with that vision. In 2005 General Assembly declared multicultural ministry as a priority, affirming the development of different models of multicultural churches as an essential part of the way we are church. A 2007 *Tearfund* survey of churchgoing in the UK has confirmed what we already know (and have known for years), that contemporary British Christianity has a multicultural face with 48% black and minority ethnic (BME) adults in regular church attendance compared to 15% of white adults. However, many amongst us still dismiss the relevance of the multicultural vision on the basis that '*they*' are not in *our* neighbourhoods! Others confine the multicultural vision to the area of social responsibility.

The image of the church as the body of Christ means that we who are in Christ are always connected to one another. To dismiss the existence and cares of others because '*they*' are not in the vicinity repudiates our unity in Christ and is a block to a closer relationship with God. Further, '*they*' are more than just a matter of social responsibility. '*They*' are '*human beings*' and must be treated as such for the sake of the church's life and future.

1.2 Against the background of the *Catch the Vision* (CTV) process we make our contribution to reshaping the United Reformed Church for the 21st century, enabling the whole church to put into practice the multicultural vision:

Education, Training, Awareness Raising, Inspiration & Celebration

- Our seminars, workshops, conferences, preaching, and speaking engagements across the UK have raised the profile of multicultural ministry in Britain and beyond.
- Our training resources, *We Belong: Celebrating Diversity and Living Hospitality* and *The Multicultural Ministry Toolkit* (page 127) encourage good cross-cultural and anti-racism practice at all levels of church life.
The huge demand from our ecumenical partners across the UK and Europe affirms multicultural ministry as a mission priority, and reflects the urgent help churches need to cope with cultural diversity. The United Reformed Church is now widely recognised as a leader in multicultural ministry.
- Our *Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Advocates Network* remains the most effective grassroots instrument for programme delivery, promotion, inter-community co-operation, and infecting the church and wider community with the multicultural vision.
- Our 1st *United Reformed Church Multicultural Celebration*, an inspirational multicultural celebration, is planned for 1 December 2007 (page 128).

Supporting Black and Minority Ethnic Ministries

- Minority ethnic ministries are crucial for leadership development, support for the younger generation, and for the celebration of culture, spirituality, and identity. In 2007 we hold our second *URC Annual Ghanaian Conference*, our first major *URC Korean Ministry Consultation*, and our first *URC Asian Christian Ministry Conference*.
- *EMLOMA*¹ has grown into a truly multicultural forum for sharing ministry skills, stories, and engaging prayerfully, theologically, and biblically with love and respect.

¹ Ethnic Minority Lay and Ordained Ministers' Association – the group is considering changing its name to MELOMA (Minority Ethnic Lay and Ordained Ministers' Assoc) to be consistent with current terminology

Shaping Church Policy

- The United Reformed Church audit for barriers to full participation of BME people in the life of the church was conducted by an *Ecumenical Audit Group* who reported² to Mission Council in March 2007.
- Theological education centres are crucial to both the thinking and activity of the Church. Ministers spend at least two years within these institutions, and then go on to be leaders in the local churches, and indeed the national and regional levels for several decades. In our theological education centres there are few students, and no staff at all, from BME background. The report commended the *Education and Learning Committee* for prioritising the need to address our concerns regarding the *recruitment processes for students, the content of courses, the selection of staff, the books in our libraries, and indeed the whole cultural and spiritual approach to theological education and learning*.
- The report stressed the importance of *ethnic monitoring* (page 129) for setting strategies for inclusiveness, the critical role church *leadership* must assume in promoting multicultural sensitivity, and the need for intentional measures to ensure *balanced representation* at all levels of decision making.

RESOLUTION 34

Representation at General Assembly

General Assembly agree, in principle, to apply to black and minority ethnic people a similar arrangement to that made for youth representation at the new and reduced General Assembly.

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Bicentenary 2007

- Our worship resource produced specifically for this event and made available for use throughout the year continues to be in great demand (page 127).
- This year we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the British parliament act abolishing the slave trade. Slavery itself continued and, outside British territory, the trade in enslaved people continued. The term *slave* in this context means a human being reduced to 'chattel' and traded as such with no human rights whatsoever. In 300 years about 10-12 million Africans were transported to the Americas as slaves. Many British women and men were active in the movement to abolish the slave trade. In 1795, David Bogue, a Scottish Congregationalist, preached a sermon that was a searing indictment of colonisation and the slave trade:

"...since the invention of the mariner's compass...nearly all the tribes of the earth have been brought into view, and some kind of intercourse established with them. And for what end is all this? Was America discovered to our view, that those... who first landed on her shores, might rob the inhabitants of their country, murder them by the millions, and send the few that remained into the bowels of the earth to dig for gold to allay the cravings of their accursed avarice? Were thy coasts, O Africa, unveiled to our eyes, that Christian merchants, sanctioned by Christian legislatures, might drag thy... sons and daughters from their native soil...to be bondmen and bondwomen in their distant colonies, till welcome death put an end to the bitterness of sorrow?... Do ye think men of literature and philosophy, that the chief design is to gratify your curiosity, to make your maps more full,... and your histories of man in his various forms and institutions more perfect? Do ye suppose, ye men of commerce, that the great end of God in this dispensation is, that the manufactures of England might find a more extensive and profitable market, and that the commodities furnished by these distant lands might minister to our convenience, luxury and affluence? No... The true state of the case is this. God in

² See Mission Council report, page 47, para 3.3.

his Providence has discovered these nations to us, and given us intercourse with them, that a door might thereby be opened for the entrance of the gospel, and that messengers might be sent to them with the joyful tidings of salvation by the cross of Christ."

1.3 We have still to learn the lesson that God has made us for each other, to delight together in God's grace, rather than to exploit each other for our own selfish purposes. The transatlantic slave trade casts a long shadow over relations between black and white people. Celebrating this anniversary as if white people did black people a favour in 1807 is to misread history. It was one small step towards remedying injustice and cruelty that has continued into modern times. We need to acknowledge that and to pledge ourselves to live together as people of the one God, sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus.

RESOLUTION 35

Anniversary of the abolition of the British Slave Trade

In commemorating the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in British territories General Assembly adopts the following statement of regret and commitment and calls upon all members of the United Reformed Church to do the same:

- We recognise the inhuman treatment of Africans transported across the Atlantic as slaves and forced to work in degrading conditions.
- We are sorry for the legacy of that oppression which still distorts our relations with one another.
- We rejoice in the courage of those, black and white, who challenged the values of their day that allowed the slave trade to happen, and we pledge ourselves to recognise the dignity of all God's people and to build our society on that principle.
- We commit ourselves to the continuing struggle for justice for all the oppressed, including the many who are held in bondage today.

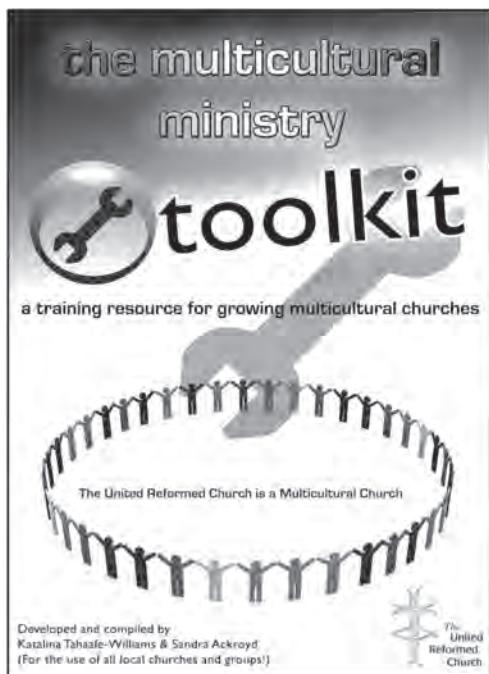
1.4 Guidelines for Minority Ethnic conferences can be found on www.urc.org.uk





The United Reformed Church declares itself to be a Multicultural Church welcoming all cultures and ethnicity in worship witness and service, and celebrating the diverse gifts of the whole people of God for the mission and ministry to which God calls us.





The Multicultural Ministry Toolkit represents a strategy not only for growing multicultural congregations in the United Reformed Church, but it can also be a strategy for church growth. This is part of the vision of multicultural ministry, and the churches and members of the United Reformed Church across the three nations are encouraged to be open and willing to make full use of the toolkit.

The toolkit has nine sessions covering key characteristics of a church that is truly multicultural. The activities are for use with adults, young people and children.

Each session has:

- *introduction*
- *interactive activity*
- *group reflection*
- *resource materials*

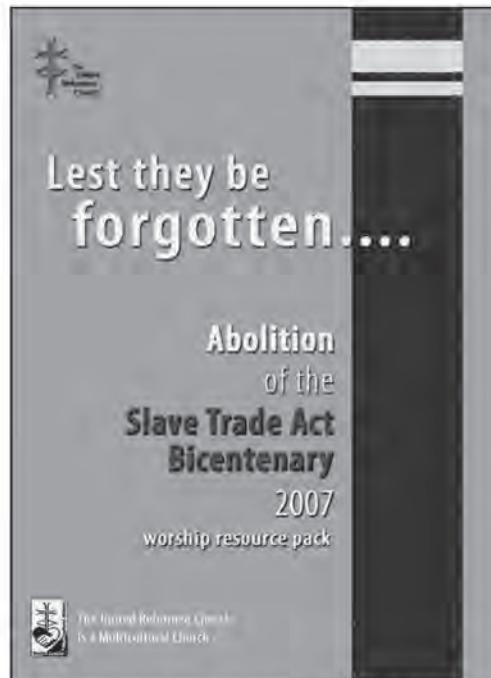
The toolkit can be adapted for use by groups to become multicultural churches/communities.

"Lest they be forgotten..." worship pack has been put together with resources to help mark this event.

There are sermon outlines, suggested readings, suggested hymns, historical narratives, – and much, much more!

The bicentenary can be marked at any time throughout the year, not only on 25th March.

There is a limited print run.

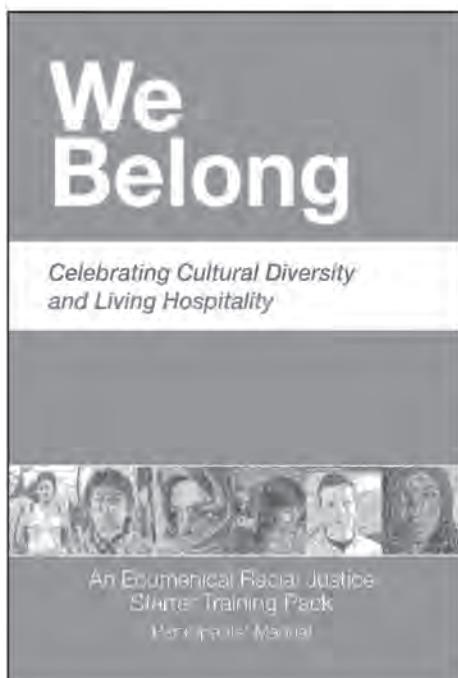


"All of us black and white, have been given a gift - the chance to enjoy some of the human diversity which God has made ... This **study pack**, *We Belong* is a way of equipping us to enjoy that diversity and make us see our faith from a different angle".

The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard
Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge

"The materials within the **study pack** aim to create a 'sacred and safe space' where people can listen to each other's stories and discover, to their surprise, that there are hidden and unconscious forms of racism all around them."

The Revd Professor Paul Fiddes, Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford





Multicultural Celebration 2007

Saturday 1st December 2007

The United Reformed Church is a Multicultural Church

*Celebrate our diverse spirituality, share across cultures, develop friendships...
Come and catch the vision of the multicultural church and be inspired!*

Key Note Speaker:

The Bishop of Southwark Rt Rev Dr Thomas Butler

Preacher:

Moderator 2007-2008 Revd Prof Stephen Orchard

Venue:

The Emmanuel Centre, 9-23 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3DW

Time:

10am - 4pm

This is an all age event

Celebrating Faith and Culture: *Your contribution*

The United Reformed Church has professed to being a Multicultural Church.

The United Reformed Church

Multicultural Celebration 2007 is about coming together to be inspired by each other's stories and cultures. It is an opportunity to celebrate our diverse spirituality, to share each other's cultures and experiences, to deepen cross-cultural understanding, to network and to develop bonds of friendship.

This is an opportunity for **ALL** United Reformed Church congregations to come and share ideas and celebrate the rich cultural diversity that exists in the church and society. For that reason we invite you to prepare an item/performance that expresses your culture and faith (maximum 10 minutes) that **ALL** can enjoy. It can be drama, dance, song, poetry or ... any way you see fit.

Please let us know by the **16th July 2007** if you are contributing to this part of the day.

Multicultural Church Banner Competition



For **ALL** churches
For **ALL** children and young people

If you have children and young people in your church please encourage them to participate

THEME: The United Reformed Church is a Multicultural Church: Your Vision of the Multicultural Church

(which can be presented in any medium e.g. fabric, paper, card etc)

SIZE: A1, 594 x 841 mm or 23.4 x 33.1 inches

PRIZES will be awarded

Closing date of entry is **19th October 2007** and finished banners are to be brought to the Multicultural Celebration on **1st December**

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry**

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC SKILLS AUDIT

The United Reformed Church is committed to equal opportunities and has declared itself a multicultural church. As such it will aim to make use of the rich diversity of its membership and will ensure that all appointments are made without discrimination or prejudice. Currently there seems to be a shortage of black and minority ethnic representation and participation in the life of the whole church. In order to begin to address that imbalance the United Reformed Church is developing a database of skills and interests among Black and Minority Ethnic members of local congregations. This database will enable suitably experienced people to be identified when opportunities arise in the future to nominate people onto decision-making Committees and Boards, and Appointing/Review Groups within the Church at local, regional and national levels (across Wales, Scotland, and England).

Please take a few minutes to read and complete the following questionnaire.

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Your skills and experience will have been acquired through work, as a volunteer in an organisation like a housing association, community organisation, political party, trade union, etc, or as a helper in your church. Please tick the items that best describe your experiences and skills:

Accounting & Finance	_____	Human Resources	_____
Administration	_____	Legal Matters	_____
Chairing Meetings	_____	Maintaining/Developing Buildings	_____
Counselling & Mental Health	_____	Media	_____
Community & Team Building	_____	Youth & Children's Work	_____
Education & Teaching	_____	Writing Minutes & Keeping Records	_____
Health & Social Care	_____	Other (.....)	_____

AREAS OF INTEREST IN THE CHURCH

I would be interested in learning more about becoming:

A Church Related Community Worker	_____
A lay preacher	_____
A non-stipendiary minister	_____
A stipendiary minister	_____
A worship leader	_____

**CHURCH GROUPS, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES I WOULD LIKE TO
PARTICIPATE IN**

Synod (regional) Committees	_____		
General Assembly (covering three nations) Committees	_____		
in the areas of:	_____		
Church & Society	_____	Education & Learning	_____
Communications	_____	Equal Opportunities	_____
Doctrine & Worship	_____	Finance	_____
Ecumenical	_____	International Relations	_____
Other (.....)	_____	Ministries	_____
		Youth,	_____
		Children's & Pilots	_____

NAME:

ADDRESS (including postcode):

Telephone (home):

Telephone (work):

Mobile:

E-mail address:

Local church where you are a member:

DATA PROTECTION ACT

The information supplied will only be used by the United Reformed Church for the purposes of administration.

Thank you for completing this form.

Please return it to:

**Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, Secretary for Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry
The United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT**



1.1 **Better Together** is a good title for the work of the ecumenical committee as well as for the title for the booklet of ideas and stories illustrating ways forward in local ecumenism which we produced for Assembly 2006. It is also good to read this report alongside the report from Doctrine, Prayer and Worship with whom it makes many connections.

1.2 **Belonging to the World Church** is doing our international engagement better together. We belong together with our sisters and brothers in Christ around the world, together we learn from one another, rejoice with each other, and stand together in our trials and tribulations.

1.3 **United Areas** are an example of better together and the second United Areas Consultation, sponsored by the Methodist – United Reformed Church Liaison Committee, met in Pembrokeshire in October 2005. There are now six United Areas in England and Wales, one of which, the Herts and Essex Border Ecumenical Area, has expanded following Methodist restructuring in and around London. A seventh, in Central Sussex, will be inaugurated in September 2007

1.4 To make it even better together we look forward to updated material from the **How to Make It Work** Pack becoming available on both Churches' Websites (www.urc.org.uk). The Liaison Committee has also worked hard on difficulties arising from both changes to Methodist 'Recognised and Regarded' and 'Authorised to Serve' status and the consequences for United Areas of the abolition of district councils.

2.1 **Learning together** is part of the contribution of representatives of ecumenical partners to the **Consultation on Eldership** in October 2006. It included a firm statement of the principle that ecumenical progress should be based not on convenience but on producing reasoned justifications for practice with which partners can engage. The opening of the two **Bilateral Dialogues** described in the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Report is another opportunity for learning together.

2.2 Learning is characteristic of much of what constitutes the **Belonging to the World Church** programme (see BWC: Changing Lives). It also forms the core of our partnership assistance programmes, teaching English for church workers in Taiwan, Korea and Burma/Myanmar, developing and supporting an African partnership training network amongst our non-CWM (Council for World Mission) African partners in conjunction with the CWM Africa Region, and working with other bodies, like the Romans One Eleven Trust, to develop specific education and training opportunities in Uganda, Mozambique and Angola.

3.1 **Rejoicing together** is the highlight of large ecumenical gatherings such as the World Council of Churches Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February 2006 (<http://www.wcc-assembly.info/>). It is also a feature of most people's experience of **sharing with our international partners**, through visitors to the United Reformed Church like the Taiwanese choir at Holiday Forum 2006 or when individuals and groups visit one of our overseas partners and experience their context, such as the Mersey synod visit to Malawi in August 2005.

3.2 In June in Speyer and in October in York, we will be celebrating fifty years of the covenant originally agreed between the then Congregational Union of England and Wales and Die Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz, enabling pulpit and table fellowship. It symbolises the reconciliation of the two churches following the second world war, giving thanks to God for all that it has enabled both for our two churches and more widely in Europe through the Leuenberg Agreement which has grown into the **Community of Protestant Churches in Europe**.

4.1 **Standing together** is the more demanding side of what it means to belong together. We have been aware prayerfully of much painful restructuring, particularly at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Methodist Church. The Churches Together in England Coordinating Group for Local Unity produced a **new draft constitution for Local Ecumenical Partnerships**, enabling something appropriate for each local context to be written via a questionnaire and support document with suggestions for all answers. It remains to be seen how far this will be affected by demands for standardised governance documentation in the Charities Act. We also look forward to the evaluative review of ten years of the ecumenical journey since *Called to Be One* commissioned by the Enabling Group of Churches Together in England.

4.2 Our **overseas partners** stand with us as they share people in mission with the United Reformed Church helping us to respond to the challenges of being church and pursuing God's mission in our context. Serving here over the last two years have been:

- Henry and Maressa Ipatau from the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa to city centre ministry in Norwich.
- Chang, Jen-Ho, succeeded in August 2006 by Chung, Shou-Hui from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan to ministry amongst Taiwanese and Mandarin speaking students in Manchester.
- Godwin Odonkor from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to Ghanaian ministry in London.
- Steve Titus from the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa to ministry in South London.
- David Jonathan from the Church of North India to interfaith work in Luton.

And serving from the United Reformed Church overseas:

- Stephen and Hardy Wilkinson with the FJKM in Madagascar.
- Alison Gibbs with the United Church of Zambia.
- Tony Addy with the European Contact Group for Urban/Rural Mission based in Prague.
- Derek and Carole Lindfield with the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa.
- Phil and Kerry Baiden with the FJKM in Madagascar.

4.3 We also journey with our partners in other ways. With **Zimbabwe** our solidarity is expressed through the partnership between Eastern synod and the Zimbabwe Presbytery of the United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa alongside our ongoing work with our *Commitment for Life* partners there. In **Israel/Palestine** we have our *Commitment for Life* partners and we also work with the Anglican diocese of Jerusalem. During and following the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 United Reformed Church members contributed over £9,000 in immediate support for the **National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon**. This gesture of support was much appreciated. We are now following it up with a joint consultation on 'Living with Uncertainty in an Uncertain World' to further enlarge our understanding of their situation and connect it to our own. Quite differently our long running support for the Presbyterian Church of **Myanmar** through managing its foreign funds was recognised by the church during its golden jubilee celebrations in 2006 when they named Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations) as an honorary missionary serving them. Part of his recent work on their behalf has been to transfer this responsibility from the United Reformed Church to the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, as a much closer regional partner.

5.1 **Working together**, we have welcomed the establishment of a **Joint Public Issues Team** with the Baptist Union and the Methodist Church and look forward to a similar three-way meeting of Ecumenical Officers at Swanwick this November.

5.2 Work continues on the reconfiguration of the **international ecumenical movement**, bringing together the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Roman Catholic Church, Evangelicals and Pentecostals with the first Global Christian Forum being convened in November 2007. Proposals are also on the table for a merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. In September 2007 we will see the Third European Ecumenical Assembly continuing the tradition of Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions together exploring their contribution to Europe today.

5.3 In May 2006, following an initiative by CWM to take forward the mission implications of the WARC Accra Confession (Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth), **a Covenanting for Justice Movement** was launched, bringing together WARC, WCC and CWM pooling their work and resources on economic and environmental justice in a creative new expression of ecumenical collaboration.

6. **It is indeed better together.** In 2001 General Assembly adopted *Three Ecumenical Principles for a missionary church in today's world*. Today, it seems right to offer something to strengthen and deepen how we live these out, restating our historic commitment to organic unity whilst offering it to our ecumenical partners as part of an integrated package with interlocking strategies designed for the contemporary scene. So we present the Statement on the ***Nature of the United Reformed Church's Ecumenical Engagement***.

RESOLUTION 36

Ecumenical Engagement

General Assembly adopts *the Statement on the Nature of the United Reformed Church's Ecumenical Engagement*.





Please read these two Reports together. There are many connections.

1.1 General Assembly 2005 asked us to take up a number of pieces of work, as part of the Catch the Vision process; work on Eldership, work on the theme of Covenant, and work with our Anglican partners on the issue of episcopacy (in this case, by revisiting and building on *God's Reign and Our Unity*, the Report of the 1984 Anglican – Reformed International Commission).

1.2 We decided to call together a major conference on Eldership, so that we could bring together at one time the various committees and individuals who have been, in various ways, reflecting on our theology and practice in this area. There were unresolved questions from *Conversations on the Way to Unity* as well as many different pieces of work from all around our denomination. We are delighted to report that the Consultation on the Eldership duly met at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in London from October 24th to 26th 2006. As part of the preparation questionnaires for individual elders and church meetings were sent to every local church. This produced a truly astonishing number of individual replies from elders, in excess of 2,650, for which, in deep gratitude, we reiterate our thanks. The Report from the Consultation was received at Mission Council in January and forwarded for use as a discussion and training document. We hope that this major conference may provide a good model for cross-committee work and for the kind of concentrated reflection on a knotty question or exciting issue which produces work of use to our churches.

1.3 The Advisory Group on Faith and Order, with members of Doctrine, Prayer and Worship, has led the work on Covenant, commissioning papers and working towards a statement which may add something distinctive to the debate, as this theme is used more often these days within ecumenical circles.

1.4 In 2006 the Church of England Council for Christian Unity agreed to enter into a Dialogue with us, revisiting *God's Reign and Our Unity*. The first meeting took place in March of this year, following on the start of another Bilateral Dialogue, with the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, which had met for the first time in December 2006, and which we had rejoiced to enter at their invitation. Both Dialogues have been marked by friendliness, warmth and willingness to engage. Both have already seen significant sharing about how representatives understand their own Churches and the challenges and opportunities of today. It is interesting that both Dialogues seem to be focussing initially on questions of identity – how do the Dialogue partners want to describe/explain themselves today?

1.5 In addition to these three particular commissions from Catch the Vision, we have also pursued other longer and shorter term projects. In the field of Ecclesiology, we agreed, with Mission Council, to prepare a portfolio of papers: a) a general one to help us reflect and explain ourselves to ecumenical partners, b) a theological reflection on the Basis of Union, c) material for discussion groups on the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church, and d) a fourth on missiology in the United Reformed Church. In January Mission Council warmly commended an offering for c) the study guide with discussion materials, which has now been made available to local churches. In March it agreed an offering for a), subject to minor additions and modifications, to serve as an internal discussion document and ecumenical resource. We hope this will be available in the Autumn.

1.5 Along with these particular projects, we continue to do our best to answer questions raised by people from local churches, and are glad to do so. We were also delighted to be able to present a workshop at FURY Assembly. We have thought about how to give our church members access to the spiritual roots of our own traditions, in accessible and devotionally useful ways, but have so far not identified a format that meets with immediate acclaim! We have also begun a conversation about hymnody; how can we most fruitfully encourage and make available the rich resources God has given us of hymn writers and music makers? How do we make sure that Rejoice and Sing is not the last word in United Reformed Church hymn publication, but one step on the journey? What might we aim to publish in an age where hymn books are more a rarity than a norm and in which the pace of change is fast?

1.7 You will have read the Silence and Retreats Network report in the Information booklet and we would want to support them at a time of exploring new foci, and we would affirm their work on Transforming Prayer.

1.8 This may be the last time we shall report as currently constituted. So may we express sincere thanks to past and present members and officers of the Committee for their commitment, input and fellowship.



The Royal Foundation of St Katharine. October 24th to 26th 2006

1. At General Assembly 2005 the Catch the Vision Core Group requested a piece of work on Eldership which would bring together various pieces of work undertaken by the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship, Ministries, and Life and Witness Committees as well as ongoing questions from Conversations on the Way to Unity. Doctrine, Prayer and Worship offered to act as lead Committee in putting together a major Conference and this duly took place on October 24th to 26th 2006 at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine in London.

2. At the Conference striking agreement emerged on the following. The ministry of the Elder is deeply valuable. It should be exercised co-operatively with Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Greater attention is needed to the following matters of real concern: the meaning of calling and election, preparation for ordination, ongoing training and development, support and accountability. In many ways all this is a significant endorsement of resolutions passed at General Assembly 2005 on the calling, training, equipping and personal development of Elders.

3. As the Conference progressed, amid a real sense of listening for God's leading, the view emerged that Elders should continue to be ordained. We were not unanimous. Most of the Elders present were initially drawn to the idea of commissioning, or were of the view that the terminology was not as important as the occasion itself. However over the three days there was a general movement and change of mind for some in the direction of ordination, which resulted in a clear majority among those present. What was significant was that the strong desire of several to progress ecumenically by moving from ordination to commissioning was answered powerfully by the representatives of our ecumenical partners, who urged an agenda based not on convenience but on clarity and theological rigour as we engaged in ecumenical debate. Ecumenism proceeds better when people are allowed to be themselves and honour their traditions by producing reasoned justifications for their practice. We therefore present what transpired in our struggle to articulate why we believe Elders should be ordained and a list of new work which we believe needs to be undertaken.

4. The Church of Jesus Christ comprises those who have been called by the grace of the Covenant God, who creates a community of disciples. To this divine act the Word and Sacraments bear witness. The Church is called to worship the triune God, to proclaim God's saving love, and to be a sign and instrument of God's Kingdom of love and justice in the world. "The whole membership of the Church, the clergy included, is primarily *laikos* (from which the word 'lay' derives), because the Church is the *laos*, the people of God". (i) By their baptism all the members of the Church have their unique role to play in this common task, their diverse gifting leading to their respective vocations. Within this community, often called the Priesthood of all Believers, some are particularly called to exercise ministerial offices. So that the Church might be equipped to be the Church, God summons men and women to be set apart for the ministry of Word and Sacrament and pastoral oversight. In the Reformed tradition Ministers of Word and Sacrament share that ministry with Elders, who are called to ensure that the faith is passed from generation to generation for the building up of the body of Christ (Basis of Union Paragraph 19). Together they are responsible for the Church of God in its councils, local, regional and national. Together they are accountable for the worship and mission of the Church. Together they exercise pastoral oversight and take responsibility for the discernment and nurture of God-given gifts and talents in others. Together they share a ministry at the Lord's Table. Those ministries remain crucial to the nature and purpose of the Church.

5. The Elders are called and committed to undertake, in partnership with Ministers of Word and Sacrament, responsibility for the life of the congregation in every aspect but particularly in relation to worship, fellowship, mission and service in the world. Just as the members of the body of Christ act corporately in their ministry and mission, so the Elders work collegially with Ministers of Word and Sacrament in carrying out their ministry. The Elders form a collective body whose work within the Church enables the Body of Christ to develop and extend its influence in society. As a team, the Elders' Meeting possesses diversity of gifts and exercises a collaborative ministry. It has particular responsibility for enabling the nurture and discipleship of the church members so that they in turn can be effective witnesses for Christ in their daily lives. As in all Christian ministry, the model of Eldership flows from the pattern of ministry we have seen in Jesus, rooted as it was in servanthood (Mark 10, 45).

6.1 Elders are called from within the membership, ordained for life and commonly inducted to serve for fixed terms. All these elements are important. Different times and contexts have shaped different models of Eldership, informed by Scripture, tradition and experience. We have found important models of ministry from the Bible. However we must take note of the growing ecumenical consensus, as indicated in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches report on the 1990 Consultation on Eldership (ii):

"We believe that Scripture does not point to one single church order, and that the effort to impose such an order on Scripture should be abandoned.

This does not mean that Scripture offers no guidance for us as to the faithful ordering of the church and its offices of leadership. On the subject of elders, for example, there is solid evidence for the continued existence of collegial bodies of elders both in the Old and New Testaments.... However, as soon as we begin to enquire about the specific responsibilities of elders and their relation to other offices of the Church, we have to recognise that much of the biblical evidence used in the past can no longer be definitively maintained....

We must therefore find another approach if we are to be guided by the whole witness of God's Word in Scripture in the ordering of the Church and its leadership. A more faithful and productive starting point will be God's great message of salvation for the world, and the divine calling of the Church for mission. Within that context, we may then enquire: [what tasks of ministry and leadership are necessary if the Church is to fulfil that calling?] How is that leadership to be chosen and to work together – with the whole Church – to the glory of God, for the building up of the Church and the salvation of the world?"

7. Sometimes secular models have benefited our understanding. However, we are concerned lest we simply baptize the spirit of the age. In every way we must seek a model of Eldership which is appropriate to particular Churches in their context, and not assume that one size fits all. There are however, some general principles which are applicable across the board. The Basis of Union is a helpful access point for those principles.

8.1 Regarding the lifelong nature of Eldership we would do well to heed the words of David Thompson:

"Being an Elder is not something you just drop into for a few years and then drop out of; it is not like serving on a committee. If you have the gifts and qualities which mark you out for the eldership, then other Christians will continue to turn to you for spiritual advice and counsel, whether or not you happen to be 'a serving Elder'; what does cease is the representative function of Elders in the wider councils of the Church." (iii)

8.2 All too often membership of the Elders' Meeting has come to mean membership of a committee rather than part of the local church's ministerial team.

Consultation on Eldership

8.3 Regarding the fixed term aspect of Eldership, the opportunity to stand down when personal and work commitments necessitate is commendable practice, and the simple opportunity of having a sabbatical is an important provision.

9. Care needs to be given to spelling out the responsibilities of the wider Church to the local church and vice versa in the matter of Eldership. A strong case can be made for increasing the involvement of the wider Church in the recognition and preparation of Elders for ordination and their support during their service. The United Reformed Church should know who its Elders are in the same way that it knows about its other ministers. The Elder's gifts and graces will develop, and emphases may change as their personal pilgrimage moves forward.

10. Experience in the United Reformed Church is mixed when it comes to Eldership. There are churches, whether large or small, in which the oversight of the Elders' Meeting brings the best out of the congregation, enabling the vocation of the members and hence the mission of the church. In other situations things are less rosy, and one sometimes hears of enthusiastic church members who feel blocked or disabled by their church's Elders' Meeting. The crux of the matter is that the Church's ministry exists to enable and empower the Church in mission. We do not believe that some of the negative experiences should devalue the positive possibilities.

11. The United Reformed Church is made up of diverse churches, the majority of which are small in number of members, but often great in spirit. Nevertheless a common ethos generally prevails. The size of the Eldership needs to reflect the size of the congregation, but perhaps we have limited the work of the Elders' Meeting by making it an overcrowded place, when a much smaller group might have been more effective. This tendency has perhaps been associated with historical precedent – 'we always must have 12 Elders,' or a literal interpretation of the Basis of Union's requirement concerning the pastoral office of the Elder. In many congregations pastoral care is devolved from the Elders' Meeting to pastoral care teams; it is regrettable that some churches insist on having large unwieldy Elderships in order to reduce the pastoral visitation load of each elder! It may well be that the way forward outlined in this paper leads to smaller but better prepared Elders' Meetings.

12. There are a variety of tasks which all churches need to have carried out effectively. These may be broadly grouped under three headings: those related to the Church's sacramental life as it gathers to encounter God's Word in worship, prayer, and obedience; secondly there is the diaconal function whereby the church seeks to follow in the footsteps of the servant Christ in the world; and thirdly there is the managerial task of servicing the necessary structures of the Church (e.g. becoming managing trustees in response to changes in charity law). Each of these is important and the Elders' Meeting should make sure that each is addressed fully in the life of the congregation. It is all too easy for Elders to get trapped into concentrating on management, even if good management is necessary for effective mission. The United Reformed Church has a good track record when it comes to service: for example Make Poverty History, Commitment for Life, Peacemaking etc. Perhaps the emphasis for our spiritually driven age should be on the sacramental?

13. In a church where Ministers of Word and Sacrament are scarce, and vacancies long, we will increasingly need a dedicated and equipped Eldership to maintain and enhance the life and mission of the congregation. In churches of increasingly elderly members, the pastoral care burden will change. In a society which is bypassing the mainline churches, our Elders will need to play their part in enabling the Church to communicate to a non-churched population. All this points to a need for a well prepared and adequately supported Eldership. We regard the question of identification of new elders and the training and continuing development of all Elders as crucial.

14. Ordination sets the newly ordained person in a fresh relationship to the congregation, and this needs understanding humbly and positively. It is important that the local church, in fellowship with the wider Church, marks that passage in a refreshing liturgical manner. Ordination is that setting apart appropriate for ministries which have been established, through testing over time, as central to the life of the Church. In principle we are not averse to extending ordination to include other ministries which prove themselves in this way.

15. For the Reformers, following the pattern of the Apostolic Church, Minister and Elders first focussed around the Word and Sacraments as the means by which God in Christ drew near and fed the people. These days that starting point continues to inspire ideas of Minister and Elders working together so that through them God may equip and enable God's people for service. To this end there will be those set apart to particular Ministries of Word and Sacraments and those called Elders who will share with them in oversight in order to equip the whole Church. Together they will feed the people of God and take responsibility for pastoral care, spiritual health and the discernment and nurture of God-given gifts and talents in others. Through this shared ministry they also have a representative role in the wider councils of the Church and ecumenically. Out of this equipping many other ministries have emerged and will emerge. We wish particularly to affirm those of Church Related Community Workers and Lay Preachers.

16. We ask for further work on the following:

- Models of good practice in identification of new elders, their preparation before and continuing development after ordination.
- Models of good practice in the conduct, content and oversight of Elders' Meetings.
- Teasing out theologically the differences between ordination and commissioning.
- The biblical roots of the language and practice of particular ministries.
- The consequences of the fact that the whole membership of the Church, including the clergy, is primarily "lay", and the effects of making distinctions between "lay" and "ordained".
- Continuity and change in ecumenical understandings of ordination.
- What our liturgies of induction and ordination reveal about our theological intentions and ecclesiology.
- The role of Ministers and Elders together in Christian initiation.



Bibliography

- i) "The training of Laymen in the Church" from *Concerns of the Churches*, preparation study for the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1948, p 16.
- ii) "Evidence for a Reformed Order in Scripture" in *Eldership in the Reformed Churches Today*, World Alliance of Reformed Churches Geneva 1990, pp 8 & 9.
- iii) David M Thompson "Understanding the Eldership", background paper for the St Katharine's Consultation October 2006.

The Nature of the United Reformed Church's Ecumenical Engagement

General Assembly 2007

The Challenge

Where should we focus our limited resources for ecumenical initiatives? To answer that question, the Ecumenical Committee has tried to get a clearer picture of how our current ecumenical engagement needs to look.

Where Are We?

1. A lot has happened in the last ten years. In the 1990s the *Called to Be One* process replaced Councils of Churches with Churches Together groups and drew Roman Catholics into full involvement. It said nothing about inter-faith or environmental/ecological issues, though, whereas today both are centre stage.
2. The Anglican – Methodist Covenant has been a real cause for rejoicing, laying to rest the damaging myths held in each tradition about the other's history. However, it has shown how difficult it will be to bring about further visible, structural unity. More immediately attainable goals are needed, though not as substitutes for the ultimate prize.
3. The recent Methodist – United Reformed Church document *Peacemaking: a Christian vocation* has been hailed as an excellent example of modern ecumenical collaboration – a short, intense study on a focussed area, co-opting experts to do a particular piece of work. Many younger ecumenists see their most natural outlet as the single-issue pressure group on concerns such as trade justice, refugees and asylum issues, or the environment.
4. The United Reformed Church is still firmly committed to ecumenical activity. We give thanks for courageous witness and painstaking hard work in Local Ecumenical Partnerships, intermediate forums and national Ecumenical Instruments. We rejoice at ever-growing membership of ecumenical bodies. The bad news is that we have to recognise, honestly, the many problems of relating in several directions at the same time, the frustration caused by lack of progress, and the sometimes bewildering complexity of relationships.
5. Today the ecumenical movement can be very varied. It is also building bridges to those in non traditional churches, outside the Churches Together structures – notably Pentecostals, New Churches and Fresh Expressions of Church.
6. One focus for the ecumenical debate is about responding to diversity in unity. This arises because:
 - a) Many ecumenical partners find themselves threatened by potentially church-dividing issues, especially around human sexuality. They are confronted with the question: *how do we hold together those within our own number who in all integrity disagree?*"
 - b) Some see God calling us to new, emerging ways of being church or fresh expressions, and ask how to hold together more traditional and more experimental forms, while encouraging a thousand different flowers to bloom.
 - c) Those pondering the shape of global Christianity wonder how to hold together the forms it takes in the North and West with those emerging from Southern cultures.
 - d) Some traditions worldwide stress their particular roots. Others are forming united or uniting churches across historic divides. Both these witnesses need to be heard.

The Nature of the United Reformed Church's Ecumenical Engagement

7. The other focus for debate is about how we live with our differences. As well as the reasons already given, this arises because:

- a) There are concerns over how to relate to Islam, and whether the debate about multi-culturalism is shifting from how to get people a place at the table, to how to manage the debate they then have.
- b) It has been said that the theme of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament is universal in scope, while its content is particular to individual lives and specific situations. If so, the ecumenical task is to affirm this universal scope against a fast-expanding background of different settings, ways of talking and sets of ideas. Can we recognise it when we share a common goal, or search for the same truth, but use different language to describe it?
- c) To do our theology in a wide range of different contexts is a big challenge. We have to be even-handed in dealing with others. We also have to struggle with whether God is calling us to work with what we find or stand over against it for the sake of the Gospel.
- d) Contemporary thinking about evangelism affirms the value of each person's search and story, rather than stressing the need for common ground. Emerging church thinkers plead for the treatment of everyone as individuals, so we can all learn and even teach.

8. Some people respond to the current state of affairs by doubting whether we can hold together; they predict new schisms – and alliances. It is easier to identify possible schisms than to foresee the shape of any new alliance. Those who agree about the public issues which should concern the church also disagree just as strongly on the nature of the church, so if the church split it could fracture into small pieces rather than being able to form new groupings.

9. There is an emerging debate about ecumenical core values. At an ecumenical officers' conference in 2006, it was suggested that full visible unity was a last gasp of late Enlightenment utopian thinking which has no place in the 21st century.

10. In a recent poll Christian Aid emerged as the most hated charity and the Salvation Army the third most hated, because they were "religious" rather than "spiritual". Although there are some questions about how the poll was done, it does seem that people now associate something "religious" with being old, boring and disconnected – whilst something "spiritual" is compelling, different, creative and fresh.

Four Ways Forward

11. The United Reformed Church still upholds the definition of *organic unity* offered by the Second World Conference on Faith and Order at Edinburgh in 1937: *A Church so united that the ultimate loyalty of every member would be given to the whole body and not to any part of it*. We would see certain elements of such a Church as non-negotiable, such as the ordination of women to all forms of ministry, but we believe organic unity remains important for good reasons:

- a) because it is based on the prayer of Jesus that his followers should be One;
- b) because we believe that in the last century those who went before us heard God's renewed call to be One and we must witness to their insight;
- c) because of its symbolic value for work in healing and reconciliation;

The Nature of the United Reformed Church's Ecumenical Engagement

- d) because if God is One in Trinity, and there is one earth for which we all share responsibility, then for us to be divided in our response to one another, to our environment and to God is a denial of that oneness;
- e) because when the Church is called to new ways it matters how we put things to rest. Drawing a line under our shared history of persecution and martyrdom may be a powerful response to sectarianism and encourage good community relations;
- f) because we live in the transition between the modern world of the 18th to 20th centuries and the post modern 21st century world. It is too easy to say that everything which went before is irrelevant now;
- g) because even if it was starry eyed to dream about a future with one church, we may be called to hold on to that vision while others lose it, even if we have to redefine and revalidate our arguments in terms of the world we live in now.

12. The United Reformed Church is committed to recognising ecumenical partners as people of worth, made in the image of Christ and part of his body the Church. In the past, we have tended to recognise what we share with other Christians, and suggest renewed unity with them on that basis. Now, we may be starting to see that there are still differences between us, and we had assumed more similarity than was there. If part of our new focus needs to affirm the diversity in our unity, then holding together with others despite our differences is a pressing challenge. We shall need to affirm as a core value our recognition of others and the presence of God in them, their gifts and their creativity. This will help us to witness to the truth we share as Christians in the face of our culture, which increasingly challenges the Church by alternative ways of understanding and portraying the reality around us.

13. The United Reformed Church bears witness to living with differences. We acknowledge a common starting point, but accept that this works out locally in different ways. For us, the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for our faith and conduct. In each Local Church the gathered fellowship of believers seeks God's help to carry out their witness in the place where they are. In making decisions on such historic issues as administering baptism, on whether or not to remarry divorced people, or on our attitudes to warfare and weaponry, we have lived out our differences. We will need to continue reflecting on the ways we use the Bible and hear its message, and on what theology and spirituality teach us about the richness of God, if we are to prevent our standard core from becoming a lowest common denominator.

14. The United Reformed Church will explore ecumenically the theme of space. This is important because:

- a) God's gift of space and time permits hospitality, encounter and exploration. The practice of ecumenism demands a radical hospitality towards other people, an openness to what emerges and the gift of space – not least for those with no background in the Christian faith or others wanting to re-engage.
- b) Exploring how to inhabit and use space opens up questions of how to live together peacefully in a divided global family.
- c) As Catch the Vision moves on to spirituality, we will consider the ecumenical dimension in inviting God to inhabit the silence and stillness we seek within us, which used to be full of our own concerns.
- d) As we build bridges to fresh expressions of Church, we will need to find common ground with growing virtual and online communities, especially of younger believers, in their search for God.

The Nature of the United Reformed Church's Ecumenical Engagement

- e) To hold ourselves together, across our diversity, we will need to set aside reverent space for God in word, text and pixel, as well as in hospitality, community, church council meeting and shared discernment.
- f) Space allows room to unfold and is therefore crucial to the concept of growth, which would seem to be one of God's central concerns. The first things God places on this earth after creation are those that grow and bear fruit.

15. We see this statement deepening the theoretical basis of the Three Ecumenical Principles agreed at General Assembly 2001;

- a) To expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community.
- b) To proclaim more clearly, in word and deed, that in Christ we are one World Church family living in a world which God loves, and to celebrate the rich diversity of cultures, languages and church traditions, and to seek, as appropriate, to work with members of other faith communities for the promotion of biblical values of love, peace and justice.
- c) To persevere in the search for the visible and organic unity of the Church through church-to-church conversations on matters of faith and church order so that sinful, and sometimes death-dealing, divisions may be healed and the Christian message of reconciliation be proclaimed with integrity.



The task of the Committee is:

- **To encourage and assist the churches in inter faith situations.**
- **To affirm and support individuals involved in inter faith dialogue on behalf of the church.**
- **To encourage in direct contact with people of other faiths, particularly through our advisers on dialogue with Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and New Religious Movements.**
- **To develop theological understanding of inter faith dialogue and mission.**
- **To keep abreast with what is happening in the teaching about other faiths in schools and colleges.**

Committee Members

Convenor: Revd Peter Colwell

Secretary: Mrs Jean Potter

Revd Timothy Clarke, Dr Iain Frew, Mr David Jonathon, Revd Heather Pollard

Advisers: Revd Peter Colwell (Islam), Revd Jonathan Dean (Judaism), Dr Elizabeth Harris (Buddhism), Revd Dr John Parry (Sikhism)

Speaking of Christianity to People of Other Faiths

1.1 One of the great fallacies surrounding inter faith work is that there is an expectation that Christians will 'play down' the significance of Christian uniqueness in the interests of greater sensitivity to people of other faiths. The tendency within some local authorities and charitable organisations to omit reference to Christianity at Christmas or by removing nativity crib scenes is seen by many to be part of a 'multi faith agenda' that views 'traditional Christianity' with suspicion.

1.2 The reality is that people of other faiths are dismayed at attempts to diminish Christian presence within society and look to Christians to articulate their faith clearly within dialogue. In fact Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are puzzled when Christians seem to collude with the 'dumbing down' agenda.

1.3 However, knowing how to speak to people of other faiths about Christianity in ways that are to be clearly understood is not as easy as it may seem. The Inter Faith Relations Committee, building on its recently produced resources on Jihad and Jesus through Hindu and Muslim eyes, is currently working on an 'apologetics project' in which we aim to offer guidelines on speaking about Christian belief to other faiths. These will take account of some of the misunderstandings that other religions sometimes have about Christianity, some of the assumptions that arise out of other religious world views and how other faiths may view key elements of Christian theology (eg. the Trinity, the Cross, the Incarnation, the place of Scripture etc).

1.4 The first three of the series – Judaism (prepared by Jonathan Dean), Islam (prepared by Peter Colwell) and Sikhism (prepared by John Parry) – are currently under production and we are grateful to the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee for its willingness to add its comments and insights in due course.

Islam and Diversity

2.1 Inevitably contemporary issues relating to Islam dominate our agenda. These include: the apparent growth of 'radicalisation' amongst British Muslims and the political response to this; International events affecting Muslim countries and how those issues impact in our country; the tendency to 'stereotype' Muslims in varying ways; the response of Christians to Britain's Muslim minority.

2.2 This subject is never as simple and straightforward as politicians and the media portray it. A significant problem is the way in which Islam is presented as if it were a monolith – either in pejorative terms (Islam as ‘the enemy within’), or as a movement of ‘righteous anger’ that can be recruited to serve a particular political agenda. Both of course contain elements of *Islamophobia* in that they use stereotypes that distort the picture of a religion that is at least as diverse as Christianity.

2.3 Some recent research on attitudes amongst British Muslims have confirmed this complexity. “Living Apart Together” by the policy think tank “Policy Exchange” offers a very different picture of British Islam than is often presented to us in the media: For example, 60% would prefer their children to attend a non-Islamic school, 62% said that they had as much in common with non-Muslims as they do with their fellow Muslims, 51% say that no Muslim institution truly represents their views, 84% saying they believe they are treated fairly in British society, with only 28% preferring to live under Shariah law and 7% expressing support for terrorism.

2.4 We believe that one of the biggest challenges for inter faith relations is to engage with religious communities in their complexity, respecting the immense diversity contained within them and to resist the stereotyping of the political left and right.

Synod Advocates

3.1 There are now Inter Faith Advocates in just over half of the 13 synods in the United Reformed Church. They fulfil a vital role in urging local churches to engage with inter faith related issues and to share concerns with churches and ministers. Although they may not be ‘inter faith specialists’ as such, they can be a useful conduit between the local church and the Inter Faith Relations Committee. The Committee arranges a gathering of synod Advocates each year. It is hoped that more synods will appoint an Advocate in the near future.

Ecumenical Working

4.1 In the United Kingdom we are fortunate that so much inter faith work by the churches has been done ecumenically. The Churches Commission for Inter Faith Relations (CTBI) has played an important role in this since the days of the British Council of Churches and is the principal forum in which the United Reformed Church engages ecumenically on inter faith issues.

4.2 Other forms of ecumenical working are also vital. In some cases ecumenical sharing is in the form of other churches being invited to participate in the initiative of another. The newly formed Christian-Muslim Forum for England, under the patronage of the Archbishop of Canterbury, is one of the most significant developments in recent years and its work in Christian-Muslim relations is to be commended to all churches. We look forward with anticipation to the possibility of a similar forum emerging between Christians and Hindus. The Council for Christians and Jews remains one of the most effective inter faith initiatives, supported ecumenically by the churches.

4.3 For the last three years the United Reformed Church Committee has been exploring closer working arrangements with the Methodist Inter Faith Committee. Both Committees have now agreed to merge and become a “Methodist-URC Inter Faith Reference Group” which will be able to pool the considerable expertise of both churches.

Developments with the Committee

5.1 The Revd Dr John Parry stood down as Convener during the past year. John’s contribution to inter faith advocacy within the United Reformed Church has been immense both during his time at Southall in West London and at Northern College and the United Reformed Church is in his debt for all that he done in the service of the church.

1. Overview

Under the Catch the Vision proposals on structures that were agreed by the 2006 General Assembly it is anticipated that the Life and Witness Committee's work will continue within new structures but that the present committee will cease to exist. The committee therefore decided to prioritise its agenda to consider how the structures of the local church help or hinder mission. We believe this to be of vital importance and must not be lost in future restructuring. Life and Witness's particular concern is the life of the local church and God's mission, and so we have increasingly been working in consultation with other committees on Membership, Eldership and Evangelism.

2. Membership

2.1 In considering church membership, we sought the opinions of local churches through an article in *Reform* that asked for views and both positive and negative experiences of membership in the United Reformed Church, and were encouraged by a high level of response. We also sought views of ecumenical partners and some of our own theologians and are pleased to bring to Assembly a report of our findings, with proposals for re-shaping membership with an emphasis on Covenant. We now bring our report (Covenant Membership and Mission on pages 151-156 and resolution 37). The key question underpinning our report is "*how does membership serve the people of faith while at the same time help to build a bridge between a church and its local community*". We welcome comments from your own experiences to take the work forward.

2.2 Alongside this report the Committee has identified a need to produce resources on Christian Lifestyle to help members think about Covenant, Membership and Stewardship. This could be linked with an annual Covenant or Membership Sunday.

3. Eldership

We considered how an elders meeting can provide leadership for mission, while having to act as 'managing trustees' for the local church. That took us on to discussing how to identify Christian maturity for eldership and what part the wider church might take in preparing people for service. We took these concerns to the inter-committee consultation on eldership in October 2006, and hope that the understanding of elders will increase through discussing the resulting paper being presented by Doctrine, Prayer and Worship. We look forward to the further work of identifying and sharing best practice in selecting and preparing elders for their role, and in the effective running of Elders Meetings.

4. Evangelism

The committee has been working on evangelism for some time, building on the Decade of Evangelism in the 1990's and on resolutions about evangelism and evangelists agreed by General Assembly over several years. A resolution in 1998 talked about evangelism as Believing, Belonging and Becoming, rather than any particular method. In 2001 the report 'Growing Up to the Ministry of Evangelists' accompanied resolutions on recognising, releasing, and supporting gifted people for the work. In the last two years, members of the committee have worked on the qualities needed to be an evangelist and have thought about possibilities for a job description. We now hope that work being done on a TLS module on evangelism may provide a way in which approaches to evangelism can be explored, and from which a ministry of evangelists might grow.

5. Other committee work

5.1 Rural Officer: Since our last report the Revd Graham Jones has taken up the post of URC/Methodist Rural Officer and is part of our committee. Graham is jointly funded by the Methodist/United Reformed Churches and based at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. We hope that synods will make full use of Graham's expertise.

5.2 Life & Witness continues to cover a wide remit with groups such as the Windermere Advisory Group Community of Women and Men in the Church and Holiday Forum reporting to us. The United Reformed Church has also been represented through this committee on the Christian Enquiry Agency, the CTE Group for Evangelisation, and *ShareJesusInternational*. We have tried to keep up to date with 'emerging church' developments and the use of websites.

5.3 We turned some of the outreach stories included in the *Bridging the Gap in the URC* booklet into e-mails to local churches for inclusion in church magazines. In all our work, we have relied on members to research and produce material between meetings, which has been discussed and distilled in committee. This has contributed a variety of perspectives and used the wide experience, skill and knowledge of the members. We commend it as a way of working for the future.

6. Thanks

We note with thanks the work undertaken on behalf of the committee by John Steele (who served as Secretary for Life and Witness for eight years) and his PA Daphne Munson who both left post in September 2006. We are also indebted to our current acting-secretary Ray Adams.

7. Reports to Assembly through the Life and Witness Committee

7.1 Windermere Advisory Group

7.1.1 The Windermere Centre is "the Assembly's training centre and a training resource for the whole Church". It is "a place where the future pattern of life and witness of the United Reformed Church can be explored", and "personal spiritual development and fellowship" enjoyed. These are phrases from Mission Council's report after the last review of the Centre in 2003.

7.1.2 An analysis of the programme shows how these intentions are being fulfilled. Activities at the Centre are usually over a long weekend or Monday to Thursday, sometimes a whole week, sometimes just one day. The programme, as published at the start of 2007, shows a total of 100 events in the year. Of these, 26 are consultations, courses or meetings organised by Assembly committees or staff 20 are local church groups led by themselves or the Director 19 are courses arranged by the Director for any individuals to attend 11 are events organised by a synod or a district 10 are network gatherings or interest groups who run their own activities 14 are time slots still available when the programme was published, for more groups to book.

7.1.3 The courses arranged by the Director maintain the balance that Mission Council requested, between "assisting the church corporately to develop its mission" such as *A Spirituality for the Road* with John Bell, *How Jesus' death saves us*, *Transforming your Church Newsletter*, and "more popular activities aimed at personal spiritual development and fellowship" such as *Creative Threads*, *Painting in the Spring*, *Autumn Peaks*. The plans for 2008 are focusing on the themes of prayer, re-engagement with the Bible, and evangelism.

7.1.4 In recent years the number of people who book as individuals is declining, but more and larger groups are coming from local churches, and there are more bookings for events by Assembly groups, synods and networks.

7.1.5 In the wider Church, the Director's expertise has been called upon for Bible studies at Assembly and synod schools, for consultations on evangelism, and for the ecumenical team reviewing the East Midlands Ministerial Training Course. He has represented the United Reformed Church in Regional Training Partnership developments in the north-west.

7.1.6 At Windermere during the past year the dining room has been attractively refurbished, wifi service added to the electronic equipment for guests' use, new accounting and budgeting systems have been devised more closely linked with the Finance Office

at Church House, and various possibilities have been explored for improving the conference facilities and reorganising the senior staff responsibilities.

7.1.7 The next review by Mission Council is due, and this will steer the further developments of the Windermere Centre to meet the current and future needs of the learning Church and its mission.

7.2 National Rural Officer (serving the Methodist Church and United Reformed Church)

7.2.1 Being a joint post with the Methodist Church and based at the Arthur Rank Centre, the role of the National Rural Officer is naturally ecumenical and collaborative. The National Rural Officer for the Church of England is a close colleague and together an excellent ecumenical network of Rural Officers across the Synods, Dioceses and Districts of the three denominations is supported and resourced.

7.2.2 This past year has seen the publication of an important piece of research: *Faith in Rural Communities: Contributions of Social Capital to Community Vibrancy* which has confirmed the significant contribution that Christian people make to the well-being of village communities. A tool-kit is currently being produced which will enable churches to reflect on and apply this research in their own communities.

7.2.3 The countryside continues to live through a period of great change and the challenges it faces are considerable. The debacle surrounding the introduction of the Single Farm Payment scheme has been particularly unhelpful. Food production and supply has implications for all communities and issues of food ethics, the environment and sustainability will remain high on the rural agenda. The proposed re-structuring of the post office network is of great concern and further encouragement to churches to host post offices is to be given with the publication of guidelines for good practice and 'how to' information.

7.2.4 Migrant workers continue to be present in rural communities in significant numbers and are making an invaluable contribution to the rural economy. Whilst governance of 'Gangmasters' is improving there is still evidence of exploitation and attendant social issues. Affordable housing presents a complex challenge, as does rural poverty, which tends to be quite well hidden despite affecting around 900,000 households. The national Poverty and Housing Action Week planned for January 2008 will include a recognition of the impact of these issues on rural communities.

7.2.5 Whilst engaging fully with this agenda on behalf of the United Reformed Church, it is also incumbent upon the Rural Officer to encourage and enable the church and its members to address these issues in an informed and effective manner. Vitally important too is the need for rural churches to reflect on what it means to sustain an effective Christian presence and to continue to 'punch above its weight' which the rural church frequently tends to do. The Rural Officer is keen to support this wherever and whenever appropriate.

7.3 Stewardship sub-committee report

7.3.1 The sub-committee continues to make resources available to local churches, and seeks to stimulate discussion on all aspects of stewardship in the life of the church. A presentation at the October 2006 Mission Council was an opportunity to seek to clarify the continuing role of the sub-committee within the restructuring process of Catch the Vision.

7.3.2 Training Workshops

A stewardship training presentation prepared by Sue Wilkinson, National Stewardship Coordinator for use by Training Officers/Advocates and Mission Enablers to take directly into local churches, has been piloted by Sue in her own church. Gareth Curl, a committee member, is also hoping to trial the workshop at his own church in the near future.

7.3.3 TRIO

There is still a continuing demand for the TRIO (The Responsibility Is Ours) programme. Acetate and animated PowerPoint slides have been prepared for all TRIO packs by the Life and Witness office. The interactive disks for churches wanting to update their TRIO presentations are cheaper to produce than acetates.

7.3.4 ACT

This free publication looks at stewardship in the widest sense with the aim of encouraging and enabling churches to develop mission projects in such a way as to ensure the most effective use of all available resources.

7.3.5 CTBI Stewardship Network

The Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Stewardship Network provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and gives us the opportunity to develop links, exchange ideas and learn more about other denominations' approach to the important issue of stewardship. The network meets twice a year and the Convener has been able to represent the United Reformed Church at these meetings alongside representatives from the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Salvation Army, the Church of Wales, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. The next scheduled conference will be in the summer of 2009 in south Wales or the south-west of England.

7.4 **Holiday Forum**

7.4.1 Holiday Forum 2006, whose theme was 'Belonging to the World Church, Sharing together in God's Mission', was very successful, being ably led by Philip Woods and Dale Rominger. Guest speakers were Francis Brienen (CWM), Godwin Odonkor (Ghanaian Minister in London) and Mukondi Ramulondi (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa). Their presentations enabled the conference to relate the global to the local, so that in 'Belonging to the World Church' we recognise that together, as brothers and sisters in Christ we can indeed make a difference to the world, whether the one on our doorstep or the planet as a whole. Much appreciated by all were the Taiwanese choir, who brought such a wide diversity of their music and traditions which helped to broaden our thinking.

7.4.2 This year's conference is entitled 'To Be a Pilgrim' and will be led by Revd Sheila Maxey with Alistair Smeaton leading the worship and Richard Bittleston as music leader. Dates are from 18th to 24th August 2007, and places are still available. Further details can be obtained from Monica Penny, 184 Beauchamps Drive, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8NF (01268 761176) or from the Holiday Forum website.

7.4.3 As its name suggests Holiday Forum has two aims. The first is as a conference, where through talks and workshops a serious theme can be explored. Secondly, as a holiday, where the 'United Reformed Church is at play'. However, people come from many church denominations and from all over the country. There is time to relax, talk about the problems and anxieties of church life with old and new friends, indulge in sports and other activities. One problem Holiday Forum has is publicity and getting known to the church as a whole, and this is where the United Reformed Church central office could play a vital role.



1. Understanding Covenant

1.1 The Church is the body of Christ, a people gathered by God to become a sign, expression and foretaste of God's reign in the world. It is a community called into being by God's grace to play its part in keeping the Covenant God has made with all creation (Genesis 9:12). We neither merited this special covenantal relationship with God, nor have we always been faithful in keeping our side of the Covenant; but God graciously and amazingly has repeatedly ratified the Covenant with those frail folk whom God has invited to play a leading part in the divine mission, e.g. Abraham and Sara (Genesis 17:7), Moses (Exodus 34.10) and the followers of Jesus (Galatians 3: 14, 26-29; 1 Peter 2: 9-10). Christians, therefore, are drawn into relationships with God and one another which are rooted in the promises God has made with the whole creation since the foundation of the world.

1.2 As church members we join with the communion of saints who have gone before us, as well as all the gathered saints worldwide, who sit under Word and around Table in order to offer worship to the triune God and be equipped for God's service in society. Out of gratitude for what God has done for us we open ourselves to all those who lay claim upon our lives. In joy and with thanksgiving for God's gifts we are strengthened to stand up for the values of God in the world. Our ongoing challenge and obligation therefore is the sometimes complex and always demanding business of keeping faith with the Covenant.

1.3 In the Reformed heritage we find fascinating and impressive forebears who built their church life upon this central idea of Covenant. They stressed their obligations to one another in the light of the gracious way they had found God dealing with them through the divine human Covenant. Freely they had received, so freely they had to give; as Christ had laid down his life for them, so they had sacrificially to be of service to one another. Membership in such churches was not a matter of fulfilling the contractual obligations attached to membership of a club; rather it was akin to belonging to a people's movement whose life had become devoted to responding faithfully to what God willed them to be and do. When these churches met for decision making they were not concerned with democratic transactions so much as with God-centred obedience. From such exciting yet exacting traditions we can still learn vital principles about what it means for us to be church members today.

1.4 Church membership then is a person's response in gratitude for the call of the Covenant God who invites us to covenant together in common service to God and our neighbours. It is a commitment to engage in a shared journey of faith and mission with the Church catholic as well as reformed, world wide as well as local, individually as well as through the councils of the church.

1.5 Locally, membership is an expression of a relationship with a local congregation in which one exercises one's gifts and is nurtured by the gifts of fellow members. It involves time, energy and money being given for the mission of the local church; it means playing one's part in making the life of the local church a sacrament of the Kingdom through worship and service to the community.

1.6 More widely, membership expresses a relationship with the United Reformed Church in its shared life, mission and journey of faith. It is an endorsement of the ownership of shared vision, priorities and spirituality, as well as a means of becoming involved in practical engagement in support of the vision of the Kingdom as something that extends 'from Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1.8); it is a participation in the wider work and mission of the entire community of faith through

the denomination's programmes and people. In the context of a local ecumenical partnership this relationship extends to the other participating denominations, while in a wider ecumenical context, it is through our membership of bodies like the Council for World Mission, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches. In short, membership is to choose to be part of that particular worshipping community called Church, those sinful saints and saintly sinners who are seeking to make a difference in and to the world for Christ's sake, with fellow Christians from other churches and all people of 'good will'.

2. Changing attitudes to membership and its practice

2.1 Our response to God's grace is worked out in a changing social context. How ought we to think of membership within the United Reformed Church now? The question is important because our answers may have different emphases than when the Church was formed in 1972. The scene has changed both outside and inside the church.

Sociological Changes

2.2 Changes in society have affected the way people see membership and belonging, and these affect how people see the way they belong to the church. These include:

- Increased mobility.
- The increased number of separate communities to which people belong (work, home, social life, the internet).
- Growing individualism.
- People do not, as a rule, make long-term commitments to groups and institutions, be they churches, political parties or local clubs.
- Postmodern consumers ask "What's in it for me?" rather than "What can I offer?"
- This consumerist mentality means that people are quick to move away and out of groups when there are difficulties or when things happen that don't suit them.
- The widespread phenomenon of customisation – "making it fit me exactly" – extends to membership and involvement in groups.
- The increasing gap between faith (understood primarily in terms of private spirituality) and its expression in institutional Christianity – a tendency to "believe but not belong".

Church Pressures

2.3 Although the church has not always found it easy to respond quickly to sociological changes, there have been changes within the United Reformed Church which have affected how people see membership. These include:

- An increasing number of congregations which are local ecumenical partnerships, where people see no need for organizational membership or see their membership as being of 'the Church'.
- Disillusionment with patterns of church life and reduced participation in church meetings. The perception that church membership is only about eligibility to vote at church meetings means that the wider dimensions of the covenant relationship are lost.
- A shift in emphasis from infant baptism to thanksgiving and dedication services with believers baptism as the point of commitment. Fewer people grow up through the church, absorbing the ethos of being a member.
- A more open approach to communion, with it being an integral part of the service and open to 'non members', including children. People feel that they can participate fully without becoming 'members'.
- The practice of parts of the United Reformed Church to determine commitments to the Ministry and Mission Fund as if there were a head tax. There are stories that some people have been discouraged from becoming members because of the cost to the local church, and other stories that some congregations with few members have low assessments even though they have large reserves.

Covenant Membership and Mission – Life & Witness

Reacting to the Pressures

2.4 While it can be argued that the Church is called to be counter-cultural rather than capitulate to social change, it is also true that theology and our understanding of Church have developed out of particular, changing social contexts. The pressures mentioned above already contribute to the new context in which membership is being considered in many of our churches today.

2.5 No single organisational response will deal with the complexity of the issue: for while there is evidence of increased attendance at cathedral worship, which offers a personal and corporate spiritual experience without requiring a commitment to membership, those churches and communities which require a high level of personal commitment are also growing. It is not, then, a matter of simply decreasing or increasing the 'barriers to entry', but of seeking to present the privilege of covenant membership in a challenging way.

2.6 However, two specific changes are suggested as a response to these pressures:

- i) Breaking the tie between membership and assessment would remove any unhealthy pressure which may deter people from becoming members and the inequity that sometimes results. We therefore **ask Mission Council to devise a process for agreeing local church contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund which do not primarily focus on membership numbers, and to work on it being implemented throughout the United Reformed Church.**
- ii) A few categories of people would benefit from the flexibility of being able to be members of more than one local congregation or denomination at once. These include:
 - A student who spends half of each year in his/her home congregation and half in a congregation in the place of study.
 - A weekly commuter, or a family with a holiday home they go to frequently, who are active in churches in both places.
 - The spouse and/or family of a minister who has pastoral charge of more than one congregation.
 - An elder or other person who makes a commitment to help a neighbouring church.
 - Members of Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

2.7 We would seek **to provide the option of having multiple membership that is recognized by the local and the wider church.**

2.8 The person would be a recognised part of each of the congregations in which s/he and the congregation make commitments to each other within the Covenant relationship. This would support mutual caring, sharing in decision making, contributing to costs, and holding responsibility, while recognising that the person is also involved in similar commitments elsewhere for clear reasons.

2.9 We would therefore ask for administrative work to be done on how the wider church would count such members so as not to disadvantage the local church or the member.

3. Deepening our personal experience of membership

3.1 The Believers' Baptism service in *Worship: from the United Reformed Church* shows a clear distinction between two aspects of membership, expressed in two stages of the process during the service:

- i) An affirmation of Trinitarian faith with repentance and turning to Christ followed by baptism and the declaration "God receives you by baptism into the one, holy catholic and apostolic Church".

ii) Reception into full privileges and responsibilities of church membership through making promises of commitment to a life of worship and fellowship; accepting the gift and cost of following Christ; and proclaiming the good news of God in Christ. A promise, made by the congregation, is followed by "... we welcome you into membership of this congregation of the United Reformed Church".

3.2 The first of these stages is the unrepeatable entry into the universal Church of Jesus Christ. The second stage has long been recognised as transferable between congregations when a person goes to live somewhere else, or for other reasons wants to join another fellowship.

3.3 In the service of believer's Baptism (and in the Confirmation service for those who were baptized as infants) membership of the Church catholic and of its United Reformed expression, is attained through membership of a local church. The only way to become a member of the United Reformed Church is through becoming a member of a local church, by believer's baptism, confirmation, or transfer from another church. Denominational membership is an automatic consequence of and part of the commitment of local membership.

3.4 Among the reasons some people have been reluctant to become members are:

- feeling it doesn't make a difference
- being too shy to stand up in public
- not having seen it done before because it happens so rarely in that church
- their acceptance of a cultural assumption that belief is inward and personal rather than outward and corporate
- not wanting to make a permanent commitment
- having been active in church life for so long that it is embarrassing to make a new member's commitment
- not being part of the 'main' Sunday congregation even though active in the local church in other ways, because of time availability, preferred worship style, or other reason
- the church would have to increase its annual levy
- the requirement to attend preparation classes
- feeling "not good enough"
- feeling unable to commit to being more involved in church life
- being unwilling to withdraw from membership in another church
- not wanting to go through another ceremony when transferring church
- being so active regionally, denominational, or ecumenically that local involvement can't be great.

3.5 Some of these concerns could be answered by **holding an annual Covenant Renewal**, which would have other advantages for the whole congregation:

- All members would reaffirm their faith and renew their covenant promises together
- New members would be welcomed and their contribution recognised with thanksgiving.
- There would be opportunity for baptism, confirmation or transfer as appropriate, but within the corporate occasion rather than focusing solely on the individual.
- It would be a regular part of the congregation's life and so newcomers would see it happening.
- Preparation of the whole congregation in the weeks beforehand could be supplemented by individual or group preparation as appropriate.
- There would be room within the corporate expression of the covenant to embrace the different stages individuals had reached in personal commitment on their own spiritual journey.
- In local churches where there is more than one congregation or worshipping group meeting at different times or in different styles of worship or spirituality, the covenant renewal could be celebrated in one special joint event, or in a series of events.

Covenant Membership and Mission – Life & Witness

- People would be affirmed for their Christian life and witness even if their attendance and service to the local church is limited by other responsibilities. It would be an opportunity to recognise the many who have not become members who already make major contributions through, for example sacrificing their own desire or comfort for the sake of others, putting the common good before their own, and through their loyalty and faithfulness.

Existing material and resources to support local churches preparing people to renew their covenants or to make them afresh, include

- *Worship: from the United Reformed Church* (2003)
- Renewal of Baptismal Promises by the Congregation (*pages 315-318*)
- A Service for Rededication Sunday based on the Five Marks of Mission (*pages 319-324*)
- Service of Rededication on the theme of unity (*pages 325-334*)
- *The Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Rejoice and Sing number 761)* and a recently prepared study guide.
- *Talking about God* – a short five-unit TLS LITE course
- Parts of A Gift Box
- *Let's Discover the United Reformed Church*
- *Guidelines on Church Discipline* by Alan P.F. Sell: (United Reformed Church 1983), especially the Appendix on Rededication Services, where the local church has the opportunity to reaffirm its faith corporately.
- *The Methodist Worship Book* (1999)
- The Covenant Service (*pages 281-296*)

4. Covenant membership and mission

4.1 A fundamental question to be asked about membership is how it serves the people of faith while also helping to bridge the gap between a church and its local community. All our churches need to be outward looking and engage with the community around them, while enriching those who have chosen to commit themselves to the Church. How does the United Reformed Church's understanding of membership help or hinder this process?

4.2 We believe that a better understanding and fuller participation in the idea of covenant will help create a more positive and wider understanding of membership. The bible records how God's covenant with Israel was made and renewed at various points throughout their history. That experience invites the Church today, living in the face of individualism, social fragmentation, and global challenges affecting everyone, to act counterculturally by living an intentional, shared life which embraces relationships and responsibilities from a personal level to a global scale. Specifically, membership of the United Reformed Church is a commitment to a shared journey of faith and mission, expressed locally and through the wider councils of the Church.

4.3 In each place, it is a covenant commitment to the local congregation to offer and exercise one's gifts and be nurtured by the gifts of others. It is a commitment of time, prayer, energy and money to the mission of the local Church and to play one's part in making that local community of Christians a sign and manifestation of the Kingdom of God, in the fellowship of believers throughout the world.

RESOLUTION 37

Covenant Membership and Mission

General Assembly:

- a) reaffirms local church membership as an expression of faithful and committed response to God's covenant with creation and Christ's call to discipleship within the fellowship of the Church;
- b) encourages all churches to initiate conversations within their congregations and with other partners on renewing their understanding of covenant membership and to explore the importance of personal faith and commitment in creating flourishing communities;
- c) asks Mission Council to examine the feasibility of providing the option of multiple membership within the United Reformed Church, and between the United Reformed Church and ecumenical partners, which is recognised by local churches and the wider Church;
- d) asks Mission Council to devise a process for agreeing local church contributions towards the Ministry and Mission Fund which do not primarily focus on membership numbers, with a view to implementing it throughout the United Reformed Church;
- e) invites local churches to explore holding an annual Covenant Service as a way of renewing the corporate commitment of existing members, welcoming new members and providing a regular focus for discussion about the meaning and context of membership within the United Reformed Church.



Accreditation Sub-Committee

Changes to the Roll of Ministers (from 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007)

Admissions by Ordination and induction: Bridget Banks, Andrew Birch, Bill Bowman, Kirsty-Ann Burroughs, Sheila Coop, Lindsey Cottam, Louise Gee, Murray George, Colin Harley, Gillian Heald, Viv Henderson, Richard Howard, Suk In Lee, Craig Jesson, Jenny Kilgour, Iain McDonald, Martyn Neads, Jon Sermon, Jenny Snashall, Samantha White, Malcolm Wright.

Changes from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service: Sue Powell, Mark Woodhouse.

Deletions from the Roll of Ministers by Resignation, Removal and/or Transfer to other Churches: Christopher Ball (to the Church of England), Christopher Elliott, Geoffrey Hewitt (Methodist Church in Ireland).

Admission to the List of Church Related Community Workers (from 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007)

By Commissioning: Pat Oliver





Lay Preachers Sub-Committee

The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have received Assembly Accreditation between 1st April 2005 and 31st March 2006.

Northern Synod: Barbara Pringle

North Western Synod: Pauline Jones, Carol Rose, Henry Rose, Caroline Spencer

Mersey Synod: Carol Booth, Wilma Prentice, George Ryan

East Midlands Synod: Ronald Macey, Johnathan Parish-West, David Todd

West Midlands: John Desmond, Peter Murphy

Eastern Synod: Brenda Armstrong

Wessex Synod: Sandra Elkin, Philip Maddocks, Elaine Wood

Thames North Synod: Angela Bishop, Jill Jenkins, Jill Nugent, Jean Stephenson

Southern Synod: Anne Rhodes, David Rhodes, Jenny Sheehan, Wendy Whitehead

Wales: Marina Kennard, Trefor Suddick





RESOLUTION 38

Upper Age limit for transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service

General Assembly rescinds General Assembly 1997 Resolution 34 (f),

f) Assembly resolves that applications to transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary ministry must be received by province before the date of the applicants 53rd birthday,

and resolves that from this point forward there shall be no upper age limit for transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service.

1. In line with the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, the Ministries Committee believes that there can be no objective justification for retaining the transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service age limit since Ministers who request such a transfer are already trained and ordained.

RESOLUTION 39

Amendments to the Plan for Partnership

General Assembly agrees the following changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration to reflect age discrimination legislation and the changes to the Structures of the Church.

Deletions are shown in [square brackets] and additions are shown in *italics*.

5.2.3 Students who have already commenced training for the stipendiary ministry of the URC, giving ministry during their vacations, with [District Council] *Synod* approval, to URC pastorates which are in vacancy.

[5.4.1 Those in full-time service [over the age of 65 years,] except those approved by the Ministries Committee (para 5.2.2).]

Existing Paragraphs 5.4.2 and 5.4.3 are re-numbered 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 respectively.

6.3.1 [District Councils] *Synods* [(taking advice from *Synod* where required)] should take note of the condition and facilities of the manse or, if alternative housing arrangements are to be made, should approve the details of the arrangements before concurring in calls and regularly thereafter.

6.3.2.1 If the accommodation is owned or rented by the minister/CRCW, a housing allowance, agreed by the pastorate and the minister/CRCW, and approved by the [District Council] *Synod*, shall be payable. Guidelines for calculating allowances will be issued by the MoM Sub-Committee (see Appendix B).

6.3.4.1 Car: where a minister/CRCW provides a car, the financial arrangements shall be agreed with the [District Council] *Synod*, the local church and the minister/CRCW. The MoM Sub-Committee shall distribute annually the rates of reimbursement for mileage undertaken on church business, **which must not be exceeded** (see Appendix A).

7.2 If a minister/CRCW resigns from a pastorate or post immediately following any such period of leave/absence, stipend should be paid for any outstanding holiday entitlement untaken at the date of resignation, which may include outstanding holiday entitlement from the previous year, always provided that [District Council] *Synod* concurs with the arrangements.

8. ADDITIONAL PAID WORK

Stipends and other allowances paid to full-time ministers/CRCWs shall normally be on the basis that these represent the main earned remuneration. It is recognised that a minister/CRCW will from time to time accept other paid work (e.g. hospital chaplaincies or teaching). Where this work, in the view of the [District Council and Synod Moderator] *Synod*, can be performed without detriment to the pastoral care of church, congregation and local church witness, the additional remuneration may be retained by the minister/CRCW involved, provided the work does not exceed the equivalent of one working day per week. Where more than one day per week is involved the [District Council and the Synod Moderator] *appropriate committee of the Synod or the Synod Moderator* should consult with the MoM Sub-Committee who may decide to reduce the stipend by an appropriate amount.

9.1.2 Except at the time of a minister/CRCW's initial induction (when a full resettlement grant is payable) where the pastorate is part-time the grant shall be pro rata according to the scoping of the pastorate to be served. A full retirement resettlement grant will be paid to ministers/CRCWs who have completed 10 years service up to their retirement [date, whether this is at the age of 65 or earlier]. The grant will be reduced pro-rata where the minister/CRCW has not been in stipendiary service for 10 years, or the years of service have not been full-time.

9.1.3 In the case of a minister/CRCW who dies before retirement [(whether or not they have already passed retirement age)] the spouse shall be entitled to the equivalent of a resettlement grant upon the first change of residence. If death occurs after retirement but before the first change of residence then the spouse shall be entitled to the equivalent of a resettlement grant.

9.1.4 *Where the minister/CRCW approaches planned retirement and, with the approval of the pastorate and the Synod, moves into property designated as a retirement home, retirement resettlement and removal grants shall be paid. Retirement and resettlement grants shall only be paid once during the ministry of a minister/CRCW, or ministerial married couple.*

Existing paragraphs 9.1.4 and 9.1.5 are re-numbered 9.1.5 and 9.1.6 respectively

[9.4.4 The entire paragraph is deleted and repositioned as 9.1.4 as shown above.]

APPENDIX D – NATIONAL MANSE GUIDELINES

1.2 Plan for Partnership

A responsibility is placed upon [District Councils] *Synods* (para. 6.3.1) [-taking advice from Synod-] to take note of the condition and facilities of the manse or, if alternative arrangements are to be made, should approve the details of the arrangement before concurring in Calls **and regularly thereafter**.

4.1 Maintenance

This is very important and an annual inspection should be undertaken to ensure provision is made for a programme of maintenance. This is for the benefit of the minister and his/her family and is also to ensure the value of the asset is protected. Synods should ensure there is a mechanism in place to monitor the way [District and] the local church(es) exercise their responsibility for maintaining the property in good order. The church should identify who is to be responsible for ensuring the procedure for maintenance of the property is followed. It is normal practice for the church building to be surveyed on a regular basis, normally every 5 years. The manse should be included in such a review.

RESOLUTION 40

The Assessment procedure from July 2007

General Assembly, noting the demise of District Councils will require changes to the assessment process, approves the following aims for the procedure to be used when assessing candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work;

- i) There should be one common practice throughout the United Reformed Church, thereby reaffirming the decision made in the 1996 criteria for assessment work from July 2007,
- ii) There should be a common United Reformed Church standard for the selection of candidates for training.

In line with the above aims the following procedure for assessment will be adopted:

INTERVIEW OR CONVERSATION

The Enquiry stage

Meeting with Minister or Interim Moderator

Informal and exploratory.

Meeting with Moderator/or
Moderator's deputy

Informal and informative. However the Moderator has a responsibility to check that the potential candidate fulfils the basic age, membership and educational criteria agreed by General Assembly. If a candidate does not meet any or all of the criteria the Moderator should discuss what steps could be taken in order for the candidate to satisfy the criteria or what other forms of service might be offered to the Church.

Enquirers Conferences

At any point during this stage of the process the potential candidate should attend a Synod Enquirers Conference.

THE FORMAL CANDIDATING STAGE

CHURCH MEETING INTERVIEW

Produces a decision of a Council of the Church. *If the decision is not to recommend the candidate will not proceed to the next stage.*

SYNOD INTERVIEWS

Produces a decision of a Council of the Church. *If the decision is not to recommend the candidate will not proceed to the next stage.* Therefore any candidate who goes on to the Assessment Conference goes sponsored by the Synod.

With the demise of the District Council, in the case of candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, Synod will need to arrange for an assessed service and see through any appropriate placement work or 'shadowing'. The Synod also will need to collect local knowledge and opinion of the candidate, which is set in a wider context than that of the local church alone, to help in reaching an informed decision. The new Structures of each Synod will doubtless determine how that is to be achieved.

The Synod interview should also identify whether there are determining factors in each candidate's situation, personal or otherwise, which the interviewers would want the Training Board, which interviews on behalf of the Education and Learning Committee, to take into account in selecting the resource centre and training programme. This information should be sent to the Training Board via the Ministries office along with the report on the candidate for the Assessment Board.

ASSESSMENT BOARD CONFERENCE

At the end of this Conference two decisions will have been made on behalf of the United Reformed Church, recognising that the Assessment Board has a mandate to do its work from General Assembly.

The first decision taken by the Assessment Board will be whether the candidate may or may not go forward for training.

If there is a positive recommendation it will be accompanied by a second decision taken by the Training board as to the Resource Centre through which the candidate/student will be trained. The Training Board will also give an indication of the nature of that training.

The Training Board interviews the candidate during the weekend of the assessment Conference, but plays no part in the decisions reached by the Assessment Board.

Ministries Sub-Committees – Resolutions

	<p>In the event that the Assessment Board does not recommend a candidate for training then the Secretary of the assessment Board must notify the relevant Synod and arrange a meeting in order to come to an agreed decision about the candidate.</p> <p>No candidate will be informed immediately of the decision of the Assessment Board or the training recommendation. This allows time for any divisions over the recommendation to be resolved between the Board and the Synods and ensures an equality of treatment for each candidate.</p> <p>The Synods will arrange for each candidate to be debriefed after the decision has been made known and ensure that the candidates who have not been accepted for training receive appropriate support. This may include an element of mentoring if the candidate has been advised to reapply after completing some further, wider exploration of the United Reformed Church.</p>
During training	<p>The Synods will be asked to continue to exercise the pastoral care of the candidates as is presently the case. This should not present a conflict since no candidate will have been sent to the Assessment Conference who does not have the prior support of the Synod.</p> <p>Synods will also continue to attend the annual progress meetings with the training institution. However copies of these reports should be sent to the Assembly Ministries/Education and Learning Committees which have responsibilities on behalf of the whole Church. This will enable the Committees to evaluate, and learn from, the decisions that have been taken and raise their awareness of any concerns which may emerge.</p>

1. The proposed revision of the procedure will;
 - a) ensure the retention of that element in the procedure which has been provided by the District interview until July 2007 by adding assessment which is wider than the local church commendation to the Synod interviews,
 - b) continue to offer pastoral care to the candidates and students through the Synods during selection and through training.

Ministries Sub-Committees – Resolutions

2. The proposal to change the locus of the final decision from the Synod to the Assessment Board is made in the light of discussions that have taken place since the 2005 resolution to abolish the Districts, thereby removing a decision of a Council of the Church from the candidating process and requiring a revision of the present procedures.

3. David Cutler, the Convener of the Assessment Board, Christine Craven, Secretary for Ministries, and 24 representatives of the Synods met on the 12th January 2006 and considered the implications for the candidating procedure of changes to the structures of the United Reformed Church. The implications were also discussed by the Assessment Board which met on the 9th September 2006 when the note of the January discussion and the agreements reached were taken into account.

4. All who have so far considered this matter have been clear that there must be a consistency about the decisions made to send candidates for training which can be delivered by the Assessment Board. However the ongoing pastoral care of students is also a matter of importance and this might be more effectively delivered by the Synod which sponsored the candidate.

5. The process proposed seeks to address both the need for consistency and for pastoral care as it continues to engage all the Councils of the Church in the discernment of vocation and thus ensures the final decision remains the responsibility of the whole church. At the same time local knowledge of the candidate's needs is given necessary weight both at the assessment stage and throughout the training period.

6.1 The Ministries Committee suggests that the decision about a student's readiness for ordination/commission ought to include representatives from all the bodies which, under the proposed system, will have been monitoring the individual's development through the course of training. That is the Resource Centre for Learning, the Synod, and the Ministries and Education and Learning Committees.

6.2 However, the readiness for ordination/commission for students whose assessment for the ministries of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work took place before July 2007 should for the time being follow the procedure in place prior to July 2007.

7. Further work needs to be done on the procedures for supporting those who are not accepted for training at whatever stage in the process that decision is made. This is to ensure that there is a consistency about our treatment of candidates throughout the United Reformed Church.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John'.

RESOLUTION 51

Assisted Dying

General Assembly affirms the report Assisted Dying, as encapsulated in the following statements:

- i) As Christians we regard all human life as being God given, and therefore precious; we believe that death is not the end and we have faith that there is a more perfect life to follow.
- ii) We recognise that there is a time to die and that there are circumstances in which it will be wrong to continue to provide treatment designed to prolong life.
- iii) We recognise that some palliative treatment for the terminally ill, makes the patient more comfortable and pain free, but can also hasten death. We believe this to be acceptable, as long as the primary purpose of the treatment is pain relief and comfort of the patient.
- iv) We could not support legislation that would empower medical staff to intervene in ways which deliberately seek to assist a patient to die. We would therefore oppose any change in the law to permit voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide.
- v) We believe that a Living Will or Advance Directive which has been prepared by a patient of sound mind, can be helpful for carers and relatives; however we do not believe such a document should be used to facilitate a person's death.
- vi) We believe that additional resources are needed to provide more uniformly available and more high quality palliative care.
- vii) We recognise the valuable contribution made by carers. We express our prayerful support for those who work in, and promote hospices, and others who care, befriend and provide support for the dying.

Assisted Dying

General Assembly 2007

Assisted Dying

RESOLUTION 51

General Assembly affirms the report Assisted Dying, as encapsulated in the following statements:

- i) As Christians we regard all human life as being God given, and therefore precious; we believe that death is not the end and we have faith that there is a more perfect life to follow.
- ii) We recognise that there is a time to die and that there are circumstances in which it will be wrong to continue to provide treatment designed to prolong life.
- iii) We recognise that some palliative treatment for the terminally ill, makes the patient more comfortable and pain free, but can also hasten death. We believe this to be acceptable, as long as the primary purpose of the treatment is pain relief and comfort of the patient.
- iv) We could not support legislation that would empower medical staff to intervene in ways which deliberately seek to assist a patient to die. We would therefore oppose any change in the law to permit voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide.
- v) We believe that a Living Will or Advance Directive which has been prepared by a patient of sound mind, can be helpful for carers and relatives; however we do not believe such a document should be used to facilitate a person's death.
- vi) We believe that additional resources are needed to provide more uniformly available and more high quality palliative care.
- vii) We recognise the valuable contribution made by carers. We express our prayerful support for those who work in, and promote hospices, and others who care, befriend and provide support for the dying.

Contents

	<i>page</i>
1. Why this debate now	3
2. Political Context	4
3. Perspectives	4
4. A Reformed view	6
5. Practical considerations	9
6. A researcher's epiphany	11
7. Living Wills	12
8. Palliative Care	13
9. Response to questionnaire	13
10. Conclusion and resolution	14
11. References	15
12. Sources of further information	16
13. Suggested further reading	16
14. Appendix A: Summary of responses to questionnaire	17
15. Appendix B: Example of a Living will	23
16. Appendix C: Parish Nursing	27
17. Appendix D: Christian Healing Ministry	29
18. Study Guide	31

A booklet containing the Paper and the Guide, in a more accessible format, will be available soon after General Assembly. We hope that it will prove to be a valuable resource for church groups. Enquiries to Church and Society church.society@urc.org.uk or 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT.

1. Why this debate now?

1.1 The context is a momentum for change to the legislation governing euthanasia, which saw Lord Joffe's *Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill* attract considerable support in the House of Lords early in 2006. The Bill was eventually defeated, due in part to opposition from Church of England bishops sitting in the Lords, but there will almost certainly be fresh attempts to amend the law. Some Christian denominations have clearly stated positions on Assisted Dying and Euthanasia; however, these issues have not been formally discussed by the United Reformed Church. A resource pack *A Time To Die* produced by Church and Society in 2002 covered issues of bereavement and loss but deliberately made no reference to assisted suicide, for the reason that: *euthanasia is at present not legal in this country*⁽¹⁾.

1.2 The Church and Society committee agreed in January 2006 that this was an issue that the Church should be encouraged to consider and the intention to mount a debate was signalled in the report to General Assembly in 2006⁽²⁾. The Committee has encouraged discussion through:

- A questionnaire, distributed widely and available at General Assembly 2006. (Section 9 and Appendix A);
- The Church and Society network hotline;
- The Church and Society pages on the URC website;
- An article in the October 2006 edition of Reform; and
- The Secretary raising the issue during visits to synods, districts and local churches;
- A study guide.

1.3 Many responded, their views nearly always being based upon formative personal experiences, either as a professional carer, or as a result of living through the death of a loved one. Encouragingly, some churches and districts reported that they held discussions, often led by people who had briefed themselves for the task. Invariably, the report back was that the debate was lively, with people sharing a range of experiences. By February 2007, 139 responses had been received, including 12 from groups. Trends from the responses are highlighted in Section 9; the questions asked and a fuller summary of responses will be found in Appendix A.

1.4 This paper does *not* pretend to be exhaustive, nor overly academic; it does try to identify the main issues of concern, recognising that medical advances make this a complex issue. It points the reader wanting more to further sources of information. In compiling it, the Church and Society Committee has been assisted particularly by the Revd Delia Bond, co-ordinator of the URC Health and Healing Network; the Revd Dr Neil Messer, senior lecturer in Christian theology in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter; Malcolm Johnson, Professor of Health and Social Policy at Bristol University, Professor of Gerontology and End of Life Care, University of Bath, and former Convener of the Church and Society Committee; Dr Pamela Cressey, Convener of Eastern Synod Church and Society Committee and a retired GP, and colleague members of the Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Church Joint Public Issues Team; and also by the many people who have taken the trouble to respond to the questionnaire (See Section 9 and Appendix A).

2. Political context

2.1 Lord Joffe's Bill would have enabled adults of sound mind, who were suffering unbearably as a result of terminal illness, to receive medical assistance to die at their own request ⁽³⁾. The Bill contained a number of safeguards, including requiring that:

There be medical confirmation that the person was of sound mind, had a terminal illness, and was suffering unbearably;
 A specialist in palliative care discuss other options with the patient;
 A second doctor confirm the diagnosis;
 A solicitor and an unbiased witness satisfy themselves that the criteria had been fulfilled;
 The patient be given fourteen days to change her/his mind.

2.2 The Bill was defeated by 148 votes to 100 after a seven hour debate. The Archbishop of Canterbury was one of those who spoke against it, saying:

Whether or not you believe that God enters into consideration, it remains true that to specify, even in the fairly broad terms of the Bill, conditions under which it would be both reasonable and legal to end your life, is to say that certain kinds of human life are not worth living ⁽⁴⁾.

3. Perspectives

3.1 As Christians, our perspectives on Assisted Dying, are shaped by our faith and informed by Christian theology. We acknowledge that those of other faiths, or without faith, may have a different view, informed by their background. As Christians we believe in the sanctity of human life. It is God given and not ours to extinguish. We also accept that we are mortal, and have a finite life span on earth. We believe in life after death and the promise of eternal life. There is a sense in which death is the ultimate healing. We believe in living the Christian life in all its fullness within the limitations of our circumstances.

3.2 Some Christians hold the view that life should be preserved for as long as possible, because it is always possible that God will intervene and effect a miraculous recovery, beyond that which medical science can comprehend. Others feel that whilst it could never be acceptable to help end the life of a patient by a deliberate act, in some circumstances it could be acceptable to withhold treatment and to allow a patient to die. The words of the 19th Century humanist poet Arthur Hugh Clough, are often quoted in euthanasia debates: *Thou shalt not kill, but needst not strive, officiously to keep alive* ⁽⁵⁾. These words now have a significance beyond that envisaged when Clough wrote them, for advances in medical science mean that life can be sustained, even in 'a persistent vegetative state' in patients who would have died less than a generation ago. However, it is the active provision of assistance to a patient to take her/his own life that is at issue now.

3.3 The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales and the Church of England House of Bishops submitted a joint paper to the House of Lords Select Committee formed to consider Lord Joffe's Bill. The submission was based upon the belief that God himself had given to humankind the gift of life. As such, it was to be revered and cherished. All human beings were to be valued, irrespective of – among other factors – age and potential for achievement.

3.4 The two Churches submitted that all decisions about individual lives bear upon others, with whom we live in community, and for this reason it could not be held that the law relating to euthanasia was simply concerned with private morality. This was an issue in which society had to make a positive choice to protect the interests of its vulnerable members, even if this meant limiting the freedom of determination of others.

Assisted Dying

3.5 Neither Church insisted that a dying or seriously ill person should be kept alive by all possible means for as long as possible. Patients might reasonably refuse a particular treatment as being too burdensome. Treatment for a dying patient should be proportionate to the therapeutic effect to be expected and should not be disproportionately painful, intrusive, risky, or costly, in the circumstances pertaining. Having said that, the aim of giving or refusing treatment should never be to make the patient die. Patients should not be able to demand that doctors collaborate in bringing about their death; that, the submission said, would be illegal and morally wrong. If doctors were allowed, in some circumstances, to kill their patients rather than care for them, this would lead, inexorably, to an undermining of trust. A change in the law to permit assisted dying would change the cultural air breathed by all of us, and affect attitudes to older people and those with chronic illness. The submission concluded:

It is deeply misguided to propose a law by which it would be legal for terminally ill people to be killed or assisted in suicide by those caring for them, even if there are safeguards to ensure it is only the terminally ill who would qualify. To take this step would fundamentally undermine the basis of law and medicine and undermine the duty of the state to care for vulnerable people. It would risk a gradual erosion of values in which, over time, the cold calculation of costs of caring properly for the ill and the old would loom large. As a result, many who are ill or dying would feel a burden to others. The right to die would become a duty to die⁽⁶⁾.

3.6 The Methodist Church made a submission recognising that there were complex moral problems integral to the final stages of some terminal illnesses, but noting that the Christian tradition insists on the infinite respect owed to every individual human being – not proportional to well being, nor any assessment of seriousness of illness, injury or disability⁽⁷⁾.

3.7 The submission of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society (now Dignity in Dying) said that many terminally ill people would like medical help to die, but to provide that help was currently illegal. Despite this, health professionals repeatedly broke the law, out of compassion and respect for the wishes of terminally ill patients. Some patients attempted to end their own life – with or without the help of a loved one – sometimes with deeply distressing consequences, not just for the patient, but also for the relative. The general public had made it clear in opinion polls that they wanted the law changed. The Society said:

the choice is not between permitting and preventing medically assisted dying. The choice is between making medically assisted dying visible and regulated, or allowing it to continue 'underground' without any safeguards, transparency or accountability⁽⁸⁾.

Alice died two years after she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. During the two years, she threw herself into work at her church. Her husband said: "Alice recognised she would have a short life, but she had the peace that the Lord had saved her. It was comforting for me to see her so at ease. The last thing she said to me was 'I am content' ".

Baptist Times
20 October 2005

3.8 The Royal College of General Practitioners opposed the Bill. The Royal College of Physicians asked its members for their views and reported that 73 per cent of those who responded were opposed to it. The British Medical Association adopted a “neutral” position, but has since said that it does not believe patients have a right to assistance to end their lives.

4. A Reformed view – by Neil Messer

4.1 There are probably four areas of debate that require some critical attention from a Christian perspective that regards ‘the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, [as] the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God’s people’⁽⁹⁾: human autonomy; suffering, compassion and the love of neighbour; acts, omissions and the doctrine of ‘double effect’; and consequences and ‘slippery slopes’.

4.2 *Human autonomy*

4.2.1 The notion that human autonomy must be respected is a very widespread assumption in contemporary debates about medical ethics. It has philosophical roots in the work of two very different thinkers, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill; Kant particularly could support a more nuanced version of it than the one frequently put about in discussions on medical ethics. Be that as it may, when respect for autonomy is considered in contemporary debates – including those about assisted dying – it often means: if I am an adult whose capacity for free and informed decision-making is not significantly impaired by illness, disability, coercion or anything else, then I should be free to do what I choose with my own life, to the extent that exercise of my freedom does not hinder anyone else’s exercise of theirs. The freedom to which I am entitled is often taken to include the freedom to end my own life at a time, and in a manner, of my own choosing and the right to seek medical help to do so. Such an understanding of autonomy informed many of the arguments in favour of the Joffe Bill, including a number of the submissions to the House of Lords Select Committee.

4.2.2 Such a view of autonomy is open to criticism from several perspectives. For example, some feminists might argue that it assumes an individualistic understanding of human life that reflects male more than female experience⁽¹⁰⁾. From a Reformed Christian standpoint, the basic assumption that my life is my own, to do with as I choose, seems unsustainable. A key biblical theme is that God is the creator, owner and giver of human life, and no human can claim absolute ownership of their own – or anyone else’s – life. This would seem to be part of what underpins some of the laws in the Torah, including those about the taking of life. The central reason for Christians saying that ‘we are not our own’ is that we ‘were bought with a price’ (1 Cor 6: 20), that we have been ‘purchased’ by Christ’s saving death in order

Anne, a retired doctor, was suffering from an incurable brain disease. She had seen her husband die from a closely related degenerative illness, four years before. She said she did not want the “long slow demise” that he had suffered. She travelled to Switzerland to take her life, by drinking barbiturates, with the help of the Dignitas clinic. Her son said: “She was ready to go and that makes it all the easier for us. We respect her choice. We are very thankful that her suffering was over”.

Daily Telegraph
25 January 2006

Assisted Dying

that our lives might be transformed, renewed and might become all that God means them to be. As Paul recognises, this affirmation sets limits on the things that we ought to do with our own – or other people’s – bodies. Some might say that Paul is only addressing Christians when he says this. However, it would seem a strange theological stance to say that whatever Christ’s death shows us about God’s good purposes for human life *only* applies to those who are already Christians.

4.2.3 In short, if Christians are to think about euthanasia and assisted suicide, respect for autonomy will prove a very unsatisfactory starting point. A more promising start can be made from considering how God’s gift of life should be respected and protected in these circumstances, or as Barth formulated it in *Church Dogmatics* what it means in these circumstances to obey the command ‘Thou shalt not kill’⁽¹¹⁾. Whereas Barth thought that obedience to God’s command could, in some exceptional situations, involve the taking of human life, he seems not to have allowed that euthanasia could ever be commanded by God. Christians working within this tradition who wish to make a case for assisted dying would need to show that Barth was wrong, and that assisted suicide and euthanasia could in some circumstances be ways of obeying God’s command to protect human life.

4.3 *Suffering, compassion and love of neighbour*

4.3.1 Another dominant line of argument focuses on compassion; some patients, particularly some who are chronically or terminally ill, experience terrible pain and suffering and long for death to release them; surely the compassionate thing to do is to help them to a quick, painless and dignified end. In the debate about the Joffe Bill, this view was expressed frequently and forcefully, with the help of powerful and well-publicised stories of sufferers and their families.

4.3.2 It might seem that the Christian imperative to love our neighbour as ourselves would reinforce this line of argument (as Malcolm Johnson suggest in Section 6). Those who have not experienced such suffering in their own lives or those of loved ones should be cautious in what they say about this; it would be easy to speak glibly or even callously. But that said, this line of argument contains buried assumptions that are distinctly problematic for our Christian tradition. One is the assumption that we know what ‘loving our neighbour’ means. It might seem obvious, for example, that when my neighbour is in pain, the over-riding demand of neighbour-love is to do whatever I can to relieve pain; and if that means euthanasia, so be it. But this assumption, that the relief of pain and suffering has an importance which over-rides other obligations, is a peculiarly modern one that seems to owe more to secularising trends of thought (in particular, eighteenth century utilitarianism) than to the sources of our Christian tradition. It should not be denied that the relief of suffering is a highly important obligation – the long history of Christian involvement in medicine bears witness to that – but it might not be the *only* or the *over-riding* obligation.

4.3.3 The biblical witness at the roots of our tradition suggests a more nuanced understanding of both suffering and love. For example, Paul pleaded with God to be relieved of the ‘thorn in his flesh’ but received the answer ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness’ (2 Cor 12:1-10), which suggests an understanding of suffering that is both richer and more complex than the utilitarian view summarised above. Certainly, in the picture presented by Paul’s account, his suffering is a real and terrible evil; but at the same time, mysteriously, it has become an occasion by which he has experienced God’s grace in a powerful way.

4.3.4 There is no room in this picture for downplaying the reality of suffering or for glib talk about its being ‘good for the soul’. But Paul also witnesses to the mysterious ways in which God is encountered in the midst of suffering. His testimony suggests that it won’t do to conclude that my over-riding obligation to my suffering neighbour is to do everything I can to end suffering, including killing her or him. Such a line of thought leads some Christian thinkers to argue that one of the most important contributions that Christian churches can make to the debate about euthanasia and assisted suicide is to

be the kind of communities that can give suffering human beings the resource to *endure* pain and indignity. Stories can be told of ways in which this has happened, to remarkable effect – the Christian roots of the hospice movement should be noted – but it has to be said that our churches often fail to live up to their calling in this regard. If our practice were better, our words and arguments might sound less hollow.

4.4 *Acts, omissions and double effect*

4.4.1 A third line of argument often used in favour of assisted dying is, in effect, that we already practice forms of euthanasia, so we might as well be honest and do it more efficiently and effectively. Doctors withhold or withdraw medical treatment that could prolong a patient's life, so why not give a lethal injection that will end it all more quickly and easily? Or again, doctors might give drugs with the aim of relieving pain even though they can foresee that those drugs would have the side-effect of shortening the patient's life. In doing this, they appeal to the ethical and legal principle of 'double effect' which states that an action done with a good intention (in this case, relieving pain) can sometimes be permissible even if it also results in a foreseen but unintended evil consequence (shortening the patient's life). Some advocates of assisted dying argue that these distinctions – between acts and omissions, and between intended and foreseen consequences – are false, and therefore if we accept some kinds of action (or inaction) that hasten patient death, we should be willing to go further and accept direct intentional killing.

4.4.2 These issues are more philosophical than theological. However, many of those who deny the significance of the act/omission distinction and the relevance of the 'double effect' principle assume a view of ethics in which the only relevant factor in assessing the morality of an act is its consequences. A strong case can be made that Christians are committed to a richer view of moral action. For example, we have a stake in the claim that there is an important difference between *aiming to relieve pain*, knowing that this might also hasten death, and *aiming to kill*. Part of the difference might lie in the effects that these different courses of action would have on those who performed them, and on the communities and societies that sanctioned them. It is not only the end results of actions that matter, but also the kind of people and communities we become. If I am a doctor who gets accustomed to aiming to kill some of my terminally ill patients, that could gradually make me into a different kind of person than I would be, if I restricted myself to trying to relieve their pain. Similarly, a society that became accustomed to the intentional killing of some of its terminally ill members might also gradually develop an altered moral character as a result⁽¹²⁾.

4.5 *Consequences and slippery slopes*

Another important strand of public debate concerns the possible consequences, beneficial and harmful, of proposed legislation. Opponents of assisted dying sometimes argue that even if it could be morally justified in individual cases, the effect would be that the lives of many more innocent and vulnerable people would be placed at risk. A related claim is that even if legislation contained built-in safeguards, to permit assisted dying would set society on a 'slippery slope' which would lead eventually to widespread euthanasia, loss of respect for human life, and the loss of protection for the vulnerable. In a sense, these arguments are secondary to those already discussed. If Christians conclude on principle that it is morally unacceptable to legislate for assisted dying, the arguments about consequences and slippery slopes will be superfluous. However, they are not unimportant; the social consequences of legislation should be considered, and even if assisted dying were morally legitimate in some cases, it could still be the case that the likely harmful consequences were so great that it would be wrong to legalise it. This, however, is an argument that is likely to turn more on empirical evidence than theological considerations.

5. Practical considerations

5.1 Advances in technology and medicine give us choices that were not available even a generation ago; choices about whether we prolong life at all costs, or recognise that there is a time to die. So many considerations come into the debate: the age of the patient, the quality of life, the cost and efficacy of treatment and the patient's wish and readiness to die. There will be as many views on this subject as there are individuals, each coming with their own beliefs, traditions and experiences; some will have been uplifting; others will have been dreadful. Each patient will have a different threshold of pain, and attitude to suffering. Each will have thoughts and beliefs about death and personal fears. Health professionals will have their own views; they are often under pressure to assist terminally ill and suffering patients to end their lives – if not from the patient, then from family members.

5.2 As Christians we recognise we are made up of body, mind and spirit, and we function in relationships. There are many types of suffering, not just physical, and when addressing end of life issues we must heed the necessity to address not just physical, but also spiritual, mental and emotional needs.

5.3 Peace of mind is important at all stages of life, and especially at the time of death. This requires that there are opportunities for the patient to speak to, and pray with, someone she or he can trust, and to express concerns regarding people left behind, and the restoration of relationships, with God, family members and others. Often it is too difficult and painful to speak with those who are closest. It will be the chaplain, minister, doctor or nurse – especially in a hospice setting – who will listen, reflect and allow the patient to make confession and give thanks. These professionals who, daily, see suffering in others, have their own perspective, and also need to be supported in prayer and love.

5.4 This is an important part of the Healing Ministry. See Appendix D. As churches and individuals we pray for healing, and have to accept that sometimes the greatest healing is death and being brought into the nearer presence of God. We do see prayers answered, and we give thanks when people are cured and healed. We long for all prayers to be answered in the way we want, but have to content ourselves with the knowledge that prayers are answered by God in his time and his way.

5.5 Hospice facilities are under-resourced and there is insufficient capacity to cope with all who are terminally ill (see Section 8). Many without families die alone in hospital – not always the best place to be when dying, as hospital resources are seldom directed to give the love, understanding, spiritual and emotional care and attention required. Care in the home from specialist nursing organisations can be wonderful, if available, but if lacking, can put a great strain on families.

Superman
actor Christopher Reeve was paralysed in a horse-riding accident in 1995; his spinal injury was so severe that his first lucid thought was that it might be better for everyone if he were to die. However, his passion for how he chose to live his life from then on, his courage, his determination and his generosity in spirit were an inspiration to all those he subsequently met. He died in October 2004.

*Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation
www.christopherreeve.org*

5.6 In recent years, people have often been reluctant to discuss death, leaving superstition, fear, anger and guilt, especially about untimely death. Many say they are not afraid of death itself, but of the manner of dying as they have seen suffering first hand. They are fearful of unmanageable pain in body, mind or spirit and of the inability to communicate wishes, and loss of dignity when they reach a point where they can do nothing for themselves. Many are afraid of dementia and the loss of personality. There is a fear of life-threatening diseases, and the treatment – or unavailability of treatment. People ask themselves: Will I be able to cope – and what about those looking after me. What about the burden I will be to them? There are those who say: If ever I become a vegetable and can no longer speak or move or do anything for myself, then please do not artificially keep me alive. What most would wish for is a timely, gentle and peaceful death in a loving, caring situation.

5.7 It is difficult to observe suffering in others, and difficult for the sufferer to endure. Where does suffering fit into the Christian perspective? We are all part of a fallen world – it is part of our human condition. There is evil, sickness, suffering and dis-ease; we cannot escape it whatever our piety and belief, none of us is immune. We are all caught up in it, until God's Kingdom comes, it will continue to be so. We believe God does not send suffering but promises to be with us in our suffering and works through channels here on earth. He works through those who are alongside, who strive to alleviate and prevent the suffering of others. The Church, God's body on earth – through prayer, pastoral care, befriending, listening and the healing ministry in its broadest sense – can reach out to those who are suffering and dying. Through being part of, or in touch with, the caring professions – reaching out into the wider community and looking at wider world issues – the Church has a significant role in the alleviation and prevention of suffering. The developing concept of "parish nursing" may come to play a significant role. See Appendix C.

5.8 As Christians we believe in the sanctity of human life, life is God given and not ours to extinguish. Equally, we have to accept that the greatest healing is death and being brought into the nearer presence of God. We also accept that we are mortal and have a finite span on earth, and that death will come to each; we are not immortal. We believe in life after death and the promise of eternal life. We believe in living the Christian life in all its fullness within the limitations of our circumstances. Our Christian lives should be manifest by showing and sharing Christian love, care and concern, and by praying for one another.

5.9 As you read this paper, this may well be a good point at which to pause – for reflection and prayer.

Our son Danny
died a drawn-out,
painful death from
an incurable bowel
disease. By the time
he was 21 he had
gone through over
300 operations.
We pursued every
possible hope until
the top international
specialists eventually
conceded there was
nothing more they
could do. The best
drugs often couldn't
alleviate his pain
and so he spent the
last year of his life
asking the doctors for
medical help to die.
The doctors would
not help him die
and instead Danny
practically had to
starve himself to
death. What he went
through at the end of
his life is a disgrace.
After all Danny had to
go through, he should
have at least had the
choice of dying well.

*People's stories from
Dignity in Dying
www.dignityindying.org.uk*

6. A researcher's epiphany – a personal view by Malcolm Johnson

6.1 As an academic gerontologist (a researcher on ageing and the lifespan), like the overwhelming majority of other gerontologists – who study everything up to the brink, but no further – I had paid little professional attention to death and dying. But in 1988, I was asked to produce an Open University course on end of life issues. After much effort, we not only persuaded the Department of Health to fund the production, but also completed a full half-credit undergraduate course, *Death, Dying and Bereavement* which has now been used by up to 40,000 students ⁽¹³⁾.

6.2 During the three years it took to create the learning materials, the Course Team were immersed in matters related to dying. It was an immensely difficult human task; though very rewarding. We had many wonderful collaborators, including St Christopher's Hospice in South London and its charismatic founder, Dame Cicely Saunders, who is regarded as being the founder of the Modern Hospice Movement. Dame Cicely promoted the humane care of dying people with the evangelical zeal of the deeply convinced Christian she was. At that time and later, I was persuaded of her orthodox Anglican Christian view that all life was sacred and should never be taken. She added to this dictum a phrase that has become the doubtful mantra of the hospice and palliative care movement: The taking of life is never justified because we now have the ability to deal with all pain. This claim was made extensively by those who opposed Lord Joffe's Bill.

6.3 Further involvement with death and dying led me into work on funerals and memorialising with another social innovator, Lord Michael Young, who had just created The National Funerals College as a result of the misery he saw in researching his book *A Good Death* ⁽¹⁴⁾. Michael – a sometime Buddhist – observed the common everyday experience of death as a lamentable commentary on our death-denying society. We wrote (along with others) a publication called *The Dead Citizens Charter* ⁽¹⁵⁾. I took a closer interest in the real life experience of dying at the end of the 20th century, including training staff in care homes for older people, on how to understand the social and psychological processes of dying. My team taught the history of death, the cultural diversity of approaches to death and elders, the importance of symbolic rituals such as funerals, the contemporary meanings of spirituality and 'biographical pain' and how to deal with death professionals – funeral directors, doctors and clergy.

6.4 My research on older people at the end of life led me to understand the anguish that many experience as they face imminent death. The average age of people in care homes today is 90. With endless time to think, but not much time to live, a great deal of time is given over to reflection. For some, all is harmony and contentment. But most find that unconfined time for life review takes them into the deeper recesses of memory. Too often the dominant recollections are of dreadful experiences – things done by others to harm them, actions taken but deeply regretted, things always promised yet still undone. This leisure to reflect is accompanied by disability and an incapacity to right these wrongs, and there is much guilt and self loathing. Some see this as unforgivable sin. Others with no belief, simply feel tortured. Yet they rarely find a sympathetic and safe listener to relieve this profound distress: which I have called 'biographical pain'.

6.5 So when we observe the landscape of contemporary death, it is not one of pain-free transition, assisted to a comfortable end by palliative care. Such services are rationed (mostly to younger people with cancers). More to the point, the indications are that the great majority die in physical pain which goes untreated or unreached by medication; or in unrevealed 'biographical pain'. Without the opportunity to be relieved of this appalling anguish and the possibility of forgiveness, it seems right to allow those whose lives are a living hell to exit with careful provision, and dignity.

6.6 These observations over nearly a decade have made me a critical friend of the hospice movement and I am no longer able to stand with Dame Cicely Saunders on assisted death. I no longer accept arguments about the nobility of pain or the restrictions on freewill imposed by a God who will choose the hour and the manner of death, regardless of human cost. This is not our God of love. When you have seen it, you recognise the awfulness of continuing to sustain life that is finished; you know that to enable a patient to choose to leave it all behind in a controlled and honest way is a supreme act of love.

6.7 In this brief account of an emerging recognition of the fallacy of the theologically supported view that all life is worth living, there has been no space to address the theological arguments. Yet there is much to be said about the perversity of the arguments which elevate 'God-given' pain, however extreme, into an opportunity for personal growth and grace. Nor is it a repudiation of the sanctity of life argument to recognise that there are circumstances in which sustaining human life is no more than pious punishment. So, I hope the United reformed Church, and other mainstream churches in the UK, will soon come out from behind the screen of traditional but flawed theology – as we so commendably have in the case of women and homosexuals – to support humane and well-ordered policies, which will enable the tormented to end their suffering with dignity.

7. Living Wills

7.1 Provisions of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, expected to come into force in autumn 2007, put on a statutory footing – and therefore give greater status to – so-called 'Living Wills' or 'Advance Directives'. These can be used as a way to express preferences regarding health care and treatment in the event of incapacity. They allow individuals, while they are mentally able, to give expression to how they wish to be treated in certain circumstances; this information goes to their medical advisers, and if requested, to a friend or family member, who would act on their behalf if they became physically and/or mentally incapacitated.

7.2 Some see this as a helpful way in which patients can make clear their views to medical staff and relatives particularly on life sustaining treatment and resuscitation. Knowing the patient's wishes can avoid confusion and assist carers and families when difficult decisions are discussed regarding further intrusive surgery, intensive treatment and resuscitation. However, there is concern about such documents being ignored or used to *facilitate* a person's death.

7.3 Discussion with Churches – particularly with the Catholic Church – resulted in safeguards being written into the Act. One of the most significant was the statement that the default position would be to continue treatment – that is to say that if there was any doubt about the patient's intentions or state of mind when writing the Living Will, or the motives of the person appointed to act, then treatment should be continued until these were resolved.

7.4 Some fears concerning the legislation do remain: A Living Will might not give the patient adequate opportunity to change her/his mind in a situation that was not adequately foreseen, a vulnerable patient could be exposed to pressure in drawing-up a Living Will, and anyway, any such document, drawn-up in advance, could not cover all conceivable circumstances that might arise. (The Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales is producing a booklet on Living Wills, to be published, by the Catholic Trust Society).

7.5 An example of a Living Will can be seen in Appendix B

8. Palliative Care

8.1 Good palliative care recognises that each person has unique physical, emotional and spiritual needs, all of which ought to be addressed. It aims neither to hasten death, nor to prolong life at all costs. But accepts that when a patient is dying, the relief of suffering, be it physical, emotional or spiritual, takes precedence over both of these concerns.

8.2 There have been rapid advances in palliative care and in the growth of the hospice movement, such that a briefing by the Christian group CARE says succinctly: *We do not have to kill the patient to kill the symptoms* ⁽¹⁶⁾. However, provision and expertise is not uniformly available. There seems to be general agreement on the need for better provision and for medical staff to be better trained in the discipline – a clear point to emerge from the responses to the Church and Society Questionnaire (Section 9 and Appendix A).

9. Response to questionnaire

9.1 Church and Society highlighted a number of questions in its questionnaire. By February 2007 139 responses had been received, including 12 from groups. Trends from the responses are identified below; the questions asked and a fuller list of responses is detailed in Appendix A.

Many people are worried about becoming a burden as their health fails.

Most are not so much afraid of death itself, but have associated fears: being alone, suffering unbearable pain, and losing dignity.

Most accept that there may come a time when it is right to withdraw medical intervention, but that this is not the same as assisting the death of someone who still has quality of life.

Most accept that some palliative treatment may hasten death, and are happy with this, as long as the intention of treatment is relief of pain.

People do fear that if assisted dying is permitted, the permission may be misused.

Everyone agrees that palliative care should be better resourced.

Dependent upon a wheelchair since girlhood, **Janice** hopes her rapidly progressing muscular dystrophy won't claim her life before she has a chance to see her 17-year-old daughter go to college. Despite pain and immobility, Janice says she never would kill herself and thinks it is an awful mistake to allow doctors to prescribe life-ending drugs to people facing terminal illness. The core of Janice's belief is that life is a gift, no matter what the person's situation. Assisted suicide sends the opposite message, she believes. "If someone becomes an inconvenience or a bother, we throw them away. It's a Pandora's box. We don't have a clue about what this is going to do in the future.

www.euthanasia.com

10. Conclusion

10.1 Church and Society encourages General Assembly to recognise that Assisted Dying is a complex subject; advances in technology and medicine pose new challenges. We believe there is a time to die, and we recognise that there are circumstances in which it will be wrong to continue to provide treatment designed to prolong life. However, we do not believe it is right to empower, or to give doctors responsibility for providing, medical intervention which deliberately seeks to assist a patient to die. We recognise that these are often matters of fine judgment but we do not support changes to legislation to allow assisted dying or euthanasia.

10.2 There is clearly considerable interest in the subject within the Church. Many people have views born out of personal experience of seeing suffering in body, mind or spirit – or all three. Most have experienced the death of a loved one and that has helped form their view on death and the way of dying. Sensitivity rather than dogmatic pronouncement is therefore required.

10.3 We recognise that the issues raised have implications for the Church and the pastoral care of the chronically sick and the terminally ill. There is a need to offer prayerful support, for sufferers and carers. We recognise pain can be in body, mind and spirit, and that care must be taken to address all three.

10.4 We recognise and respect the fact that those of other faiths, or no faith, may have a different view of life, death and suffering.

10.5 Whilst acknowledging the dilemma and anxiety which sometimes surrounds terminal illness, we believe the vulnerable might be at risk from possible abuse of legislation that would empower medical staff to intervene in ways which deliberately seek to assist a patient to die. However, we do support the right that terminally ill patients already have, to decline treatment that might prolong life.

Yvonne,
had only a distant elderly cousin and was fearful about what would happen if she became terminally ill or mentally incapacitated. She wanted to make provision for that eventuality, so asked various friends and a solicitor to take care of her affairs, in that event. She approached her minister to take her funeral when the time came and gave instructions for that too. Sadly she developed cancer just a few years later, went through all the usual treatments and yet died a year later, after the expectation and hope that she would have 2-3 more years.

She died after just a few weeks in a hospice, supported by the church and surrounded by many friends who really valued her friendship and had great love for her. She was afraid of pain, and had a Living Will in place. When she knew there was no coming back, she bravely faced the inevitability of death. She prepared herself with prayers of confession, was prayed with on numerous occasions, she was anointed and found a deep peace, but would often ask: 'Is today the day when I will die. When will it be?' Other patients came into her small ward and

...

... occupied the other beds, and died and she was still there witnessing their deaths. Painkilling morphine helped her, but also had other side effects. She did not want to be artificially fed or to have more intrusive surgery, she was kept comfortable and pain free, but as she got weaker, she said: 'I am ready for the Lord to take me, there is no more I can do for anyone'. Over the weeks she slowly got weaker and when she died she had close friends around her.

The minister took her funeral as she had requested with her hymns and wishes adhered to. Her church was packed, with friends. The singing was great as they gave thanks for her life. She used her Living Will, died with dignity and love surrounding her, she had refused some treatment when it was no longer going to be beneficial, and was ready to die when the time came, and totally at peace with herself and her Lord and those around her.

11. References

1. United Reformed Church. *A Time to Die. A resource pack for the churches*. 2002
2. United Reformed Church. *General Assembly 2006. Annual report, resolutions and papers*. Page 52, para. 5.3.
3. *Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill*. Printed 9 November 2005. Full text available at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200506/assisted_dying_for_the_terminally_ill.htm
4. *Church Times*. 19 May 2006
5. Arthur Hugh Clough. 1819–1861
6. Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales and Church of England House of Bishops. *Joint submission to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill*. 2004. Available at <http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk/topics/euthanasia.htm> and http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/news_item.2004-10-19.9713099720
7. Methodist Church of Great Britain. *Written response to the House of Lords Select committee on the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill*. 2004. Available at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.content&cmid=915>
8. Voluntary Euthanasia Society (now Dignity in Dying). *Submission to the House of Lords select committee on the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill*. 2004 Available at www.dignityindying.org.uk
9. United Reformed Church. *The Basis of Union*, Schedule D
10. Susan Frank Parsons, *Feminism and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 53-6, 137-41.
11. Karl Barth. *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3 of 14.
12. Acts, omissions and double effect are helpfully dealt with by Nigel Biggar *Aiming to Kill: the ethics of suicide and euthanasia*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd. 2004
13. Donna Dickenson, Malcolm Johnson and Jeanne Katz (eds) *Death, Dying and Bereavement*. London: Sage (Second edition). 1993 & 2000
14. Michael Young and Lesley Cullen. *A Good Death: Conversations with East Londoners*. London: Routledge. 1966
15. Michael Young, Malcolm Johnson et al. *The Dead Citizens Charter: National Funerals College*. Available from NFC, 75, Long Ashton Road, Bristol, BS41 9HY, price £5. Cheques payable to National Funerals College.
16. *Euthanasia Explained*. CARE. Undated.

12. Sources of further information

The **Life Valued** programme of **CARE**, a Christian charity, opposes any change to the law regarding assisted dying for the terminally ill and supports the development of better palliative care (www.care.org.uk).

Care NOT Killing is an alliance of human rights and healthcare groups and faith-based organisations which seeks to promote better palliative care, to ensure that legislation regarding euthanasia and assisted suicide is not relaxed (www.carenottkilling.org.uk).

Not Dead Yet UK is a network of disabled people who have joined an international alliance of those who oppose the 'legalised killing' of disabled people (http://www.livingwithdignity.info/ndy_home.html).

Dignity in Dying (formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society) promotes patient choice at the end of life and campaigns for a change in the law to permit medically assisted dying within strict safeguards (www.dignityindying.org.uk).

Friends at the End supports doctor assisted suicide with good palliative care (www.friends-at-the-end.org.uk).

More information about **Parish Nursing** (Appendix D) (available at www.parishnursing.co.uk).

Bert had had several heart attacks and strokes, and life was limited to a wheelchair. Conversation was difficult, and he could do nothing for himself. A life long Christian he had requested the doctors not to resuscitate him if he had another major heart attack; he had endured enough. He put his things in order with his family and friends and with God, was at peace and took every day as it came. He enjoyed life within his very limited condition, and when he suffered another massive heart attack, he died.

13. Suggested further reading

Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill Bill. 2005. Available at www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk HL 86-I, 86-II and 86-III.

Report of a debate in the Scottish Parliament on 'Dying with Dignity' 11 December 2006 is at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-04/sor1111-02.htm#Col11876>

Minutes of the meeting of a Scottish cross-party group on palliative care on 17 November 2004 are at http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msp/crossPartyGroups/groups/palliative-docs/Minutes_041117.pdf

A guide to the Scottish Dying with Dignity consultation is at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/pdfs/mb-consultations/DyingWithDignity-summary.pdf>

Nigel Biggar Aiming to Kill: the ethics of suicide and euthanasia. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004.

Neil Messer SCM Study Guide to Christian Ethics. London; SCM 2006.

Allen Verhey Reading the Bible in the strange world of medicine. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003.

Appendix A

Summary of responses to questionnaire

One hundred and thirty-nine responses were received by 16 February 2007, including twelve from groups. Numbers in brackets indicates where several respondents made the same point.

1

As Christians how does our faith affect our views on this subject?

- sanctity of life/precious gift (16)
- eternal dimension affecting perspective on temporal events; death as end and beginning (19); God with us in the transition (2); helps take fear out of death (6); allows us to talk about death during life; brings hope but should acknowledge pain of loss
- gives view of suffering at odds with culture of comfort
- only God has right to end life (9) – no person should interfere; God's will, right time (5); should not act like God in extending longevity (4)
- well-being is material, physical *and* spiritual
- Christ's love for us – why does he let us suffer? God does not wish his children to suffer (3)
- my belief and desire to be allowed to make choices regarding my destiny goes against general Christian belief
- makes it very difficult to accept assisted dying (2)
- do not believe in conscious personal life 'after' death – understand eternity as another dimension – through faith we are granted windows into gift of eternal life
- not as much as it should
- very little (3)
- sometimes conflicts with more human instinct that no one should have to linger in pain, lack of dignity, burden (13)
- ensure way we live does not directly or indirectly cause death of another person
- medical advances and caring professionals, are also expressions of God's love (2)
- God's will that we should care for one another until end of life (3)
- life should not be ended prematurely or irresponsibly
- transforms it; life beyond death as an excitement to be anticipated eagerly but life on earth still sacred.

2

What is the "ideal" death?

- in faith; reconciled to God/at peace with God (8); at the end of a fulfilled life in assurance of God's forgiveness and love (3)
- without pain/anxiety (35) and loss of physical/mental dignity (11)
- anticipated; not lingering – surrounded by love, family, friends (27)
- with time of preparation (12) farewells/restoring relationships
- in sleep/peacefully (30); quick (21); when elderly/after long and fulfilled life (6)
- to die suddenly with no illness/pain – but this is selfish, a shock for relatives/friends – and why should I be so fortunate as not to suffer

- at time chosen by individual if possible (including right to have assistance to die)
- not causing too much pain for those who love me – having confidence that those we love can go on without us (4)
- peaceful cessation of the human machine
- can there be such a thing? (4).

3

Are we worried about becoming a burden, restricting the lives of carers, using up family resources, and not getting good care?

- yes to all of these (70)
- generally no (5); God will supply; trust in God's care and love; 'worry' shows our failure to trust
- media generate anxiety
- being a burden/restricting lives of family (6); impulse for drawing up living will?
- cost of care/standards/availability (8)
- elderly distressed at having to sell homes; paying for funeral/wanting money to leave to family
- horror of being put into a home
- should be balance between sacrificial care of family and that provided by state
- many worries would disappear if we were a more caring community
- concern about lack of support for carers (2); love should never be a burden but illness or disability presents strains (6)
- as most can expect to live longer, it will be an increasingly complicated situation for individuals and families
- terminal care usually seen as excellent
- good care is physical, spiritual and emotional
- hope for best care possible; no-one should be denied proper care and compassionate treatment
- people are unprepared – not wanting to think about future
- may be worrying unnecessarily; can do something about it/plan to help alleviate (4)
- should be target to match entry standards (maternity) to exit standards.

4

What are people most afraid of when they die? Being alone? Unbearable pain? Loss of dignity? Being trapped in a body that has become a tomb?

- majority agreement with all the above, plus
- leaving others behind/not saying goodbye/unfinished business – unpreparedness (6)
- dying outside relationship with God; not having a saviour
- loss of mental faculties/ability to communicate (20); the unknown
- reduced quality of life with debilitating illness more frightening than death itself
- being alone might be a benefit – the others are outside our choice and might be good argument for a human agency in death, just as there was in birth
- people seldom show their real feelings – so how do we really know?; depends on individual
- being alone is not a worry; God is with us
- inappropriate attempts to resuscitate people ready to die
- being somewhere I don't want to be – ie. in hospital
- only one cure for fear of death, the Christian message of promise of eternal life in Jesus
- don't think I fear death, in many ways I look forward with some curiosity.

Appendix A – Assisted Dying

5

What does 'Quality of life' mean?

- will vary at different stages of life/for different people (15)
- might improve after death
- having something positive to experience or give (13); ability to achieve what you set out to do (8); sense of purpose (9)
- ability to maintain dignity/independence (21) mobility/skills; being in control of own decision-making (10)
- ability to communicate and be listened to (17)
- living without severe pain/terminal degenerative illness (12)
 - not burden to family
- enough resources for needs (2); freedom from want or fear (3)
- loving and being loved/valued/respected (11)
- family and friends/relationships (13)
- in some circumstances, knowing the truth enhances quality of life
- living life rather than existing in life (5)
- not being useless (2)
- feeling that life, even if less active, is still worthwhile
- freedom
- God knows
- having faith
- being close to God and people around me, able to be used by him
- no human being has right to define quality of life for others (2)
- support to make the most of your present abilities (6)
- when memories have gone, I don't know what I would feel – just hope I would not be in any pain and would be visited by relatives even if I cannot recognise them, possibly just knowing someone was there.

6

With modern technology it is possible to keep people alive artificially, even when vital organs have failed. How do we feel about that?

- we shouldn't do that (25)
- 'Thou shalt not kill, but needst not strive officiously to keep alive' (4)
- difference between kidney failure at 18 and 90
- waste of money/resources (3)
- grey area; hardest question to answer – depends on age of patient/professional prognosis (7)
- can't be sure if illness will cause death soon or if patient will recover after substantial time – if there is doubt, keep alive (5)
- wrong to keep alive if brain death is proven (4); brain dead is dead
- with medical advances God-given, we should maintain life sensibly (4)
- our own advancement has created more problems than it has solved
- my first feeling is a shudder of revulsion and I want to ask why
- life-saving technology is good – life-prolonging technology, when everything we naturally think of as 'life' has stopped, is playing God and dangerous.

6a

Do we need to make a distinction between assisting someone to die who still has quality of life, and withdrawing medical intervention at the right time?

- majority say yes
- difference between not treating someone and giving drugs to kill them; intention is everything

- is it really living or just not letting go?
- should only be with agreement of patient (7) and family/medical advice; right to choose is paramount
- how do we define quality of life and right time? difficult to decide measurement criteria; assessing when to withdraw medical intervention is key
- quality of life may be considered reasonable by others but unbearable by patient who are we to judge?
- do not believe in life at all cost
- assisting someone who has reached the point where they want to die is showing immense love to them
- those who respond to the appeal for help should not be criminalised.

6b

Do we also need to recognise that some palliative treatment makes the patient more comfortable and pain free, but also hastens death?

- majority agree
- yes, but shouldn't be the intention of the treatment (2)
- if there is any quality of life, patient should be helped to live
- most palliative treatment enhances sufferer's life
- comfort and quality of life should take precedence over extending life
- why get hung up on time? – why be afraid to hasten death in this way? (2)
- need for constant review because of scientific advances.

7

What are our fears about assisted dying? Is it that it will be abused by doctors, relatives or nursing homes or hospitals? That there will be untimely deaths of the helpless? Does it send out the wrong signals to society?

- all of the above (42)
- assisted dying is wrong (10)
- devalues sanctity of life (2); ignores God's will; cheapens and degrades life
- who will decide where line is drawn? (2)
- fears well-summarised but greatly exaggerated
- failure of Joffe Bill was a tragedy/URC should support his approach (2)
- why are people so fearful? (2)
- favour assisted dying being made legal
- no fear of assisted dying for self if no quality of life
- pressure on those who are ill (4); if becomes commonplace; those incapacitated could be at mercy of institutions – nothing is totally voluntary; people could ask for assisted dying to avoid perceived burdening of others; exercising own choice may become a battle; who is to be trusted?
- some disagreement on potential for abuse by medical profession/family:
 - Shipman/Allitt were able to act without legitimisation of assisted dying
 - where money is to be made in completion of certificates, some doctors will be less worried about ethics
 - danger in less well-run institutions where bed-blocking is a concern
 - fear, inconvenience and financial considerations will cloud judgement of family
 - with proper safeguards, may lead to reduction in abuse
 - puts too much power in hands of doctors
 - fear of bad and uncaring practice
- 'assisted' needs defining – ensure safeguards/proper and effective controls(32)
- desperate people going abroad suggests something needs to be done; can understand why some people want it; society should accept we are all different

Appendix A – Assisted Dying

- human right to commit suicide – why not help if it's a person's own decision?
- more research needed (2)
- people fear losing control – blame doctors when they have done no wrong
- shouldn't be needed with good palliative care (3)
- once the law has devalued life, who is to stop it being devalued further by anyone with an agenda?
- if dealt with openly there should be no wrong signals and hopefully few fears
 - if individual has control of own death, that is not abuse
- not morally wrong, but to demand assistance as of right or legally may place too much weight on medical staff
- should trust medical profession/loving and caring families (2)
- people need to discuss dying before they reach stage of terminal illness
- should benefit society overall
- if people of faith emphasised that death is not the end, perhaps some of the anguish around assisted dying could be allayed
- with modern science God has given us potential to 'play God' with life all the time, eg. genetic engineering
- legalising would help a loving partner to carry out the final loving act to a loved one
 - I would hate to see my partner suffer if s/he no longer wanted to be alive
- the objections to it are far outweighed by the misery caused by refusing to allow it
- we realised, even more clearly, as our Church discussed the issue that our prayers for the medical profession are vital, as they struggle with ethical issues.

8

Suffering is a part of life but when it becomes unbearable do we have a duty to release the sufferer rather than prolong it?

- majority say yes
- no (19)
- 'duty' is the wrong word (18) – 'choice' or 'permission'
- doctors have duty to release patients from suffering by controlling pain properly (12)
- not by killing them; why call it 'release' when you mean kill?
- consider why suffering (pain) is unbearable – poor pain management? lack of skills/resources on part of carers/nurses? lack of commitment?
- is refusing to kill someone to be equated with prolonging their suffering?
Compare how we treat animals – but humans are not animals in this sense
- patient must have final say if possible (18)
- modern lifestyle/medicines mean general health is better – so suffering may be prolonged – not always best for patient
- difficult to define where such a point is reached; the most difficult question (16)
- stopping treatment knowing it will lead to death is different from the lethal injection (3)
- unbearable pain/suffering is very subjective (3)
- if suffering becomes intolerable, treatment as administered in hospices should be available
- faith versus humanity – as a human being I feel sufferers should be released but as a Christian I am aware of God in charge in the progress of every situation
- rights and conscience of those who might feel pressured to 'release' someone must be safeguarded
- society, and especially some churches, seem to place too much emphasis on sanctity of life at all costs, rather than quality of life.

9

What do we think about 'Living Wills?' (See Section 7).

- two-thirds of respondents approve: excellent; everyone should be encouraged to produce one while mentally able to do so; with proviso of legal/medical assurance that person is capable of the decision and is acting in own free will; allows dignity in death; sensible and good
- mixed feelings/not happy (9)
- wrong – grieves God and violates his plan (3)
- problem of possible difference between thoughts when preparing living will, and reaching the stage of it being acted on (5); instinct to cling to life is strong
- could help relatives/medical staff reach decision (4); in loving families there should be no doubt of patient's wishes; takes pressure off family and guilt they can feel (7); allows individual to 'speak' even if no longer able to
- huge burden to put on doctors and families
- useful as far as they go (3); not always treated as binding by doctors
- who is to execute the will?
- slippery slope; treading difficult line; could be open to abuse (5)
- should be one factor in complex equation rather than 'legally binding' over eg. views of next of kin
- problems with 'legally binding' – should be proviso for people to change their mind/review (6) without pressure from relatives
- as long as there are safeguards, so that potentially curable or 'improvable' people are not killed
- legislation must be watertight and not have loopholes allowing wide interpretation
- not totally sure why it should be necessary to take this legal step
- most of us are not decisive enough to make one
- have already made/signed one; want to make further enquiries.

10

In all of this, presumably we would want to promote the need for good, readily available, palliative care.

- all those responding agree
- need equivalent of hospices/Macmillan nurses for dementia sufferers and families – would appreciate if C&S committee could look into this
- need for hospices to be able to manage proper home treatment
- example of continuing heart medication for 90 year old with total dementia/incapacitated after severe stroke: family suggested stopping medication and letting death occur naturally: accused of seeking euthanasia
- yes, but not as excuse to avoid grappling with the other issues (3)
- yes, especially if patient can return home/move to proper accommodation for care – hospices can't take all who need to be monitored – hospitals are not the place for the terminally ill; geriatric wards are no place to end a life with dignity
- hospice movement/hospices are beacons of light (8); their role in care and dignity for the terminally ill must be emphasised and extended with NHS finance
- urgent need for practical and emotional support for carers
- should be government funded/part of NHS (5), and not dependent on charity/ 'luck of the draw'/postcode lottery
- specially trained staff can make a huge difference to patients and those left behind
- especially in hospitals; perception is that hospices do better job than NHS
- if good, readily available palliative care was a common fact then assisted dying would hardly be needed (3)
- this is where society's money and research should be going – if assisted dying became legal, less time and money would be put into promoting and researching palliative care.

Appendix B

Example of a Living Will (Advance directive)

The preparation of a Living Will can offer peace of mind to certain people, and assistance to medical practitioners who may be involved in their treatment. It is becoming more common for individuals to record on a simple form what they wish to happen in their medical care in the future, especially near the end of their life, if they are unable to convey their wishes to their carers, both medical and personal. This may be because they are physically and/or mentally incapacitated, or are unconscious. It concerns their wishes on whether or not they want to be resuscitated or kept alive artificially.

It is possible to write a simple signed statement, or there are various forms available to help. An example of such a form appears below. However, this is not the only form of words which could be used. Every person's situation is different, and you should consider whether, in your particular circumstances, you need to seek the advice of a solicitor to see whether a more detailed document would be advisable. Remember that a Living Will is different from any ordinary will which you may have made, or make, and which relates to assets you own. The important thing is that others know that you have recorded your wishes, so it is a good idea to discuss it with your next of kin or a near friend, your GP, maybe your solicitor, and give each a copy of the form, and also to have one available in your papers. It is not usually helpful to keep it with your Will! You will probably wish to ask someone to be your "health care proxy", who would take part in decision-making on your behalf if the living will was needed.

Suggested form for a living will

This is to record my wishes about my medical treatment, to take effect in the event of my being unable to communicate my preferences at a future date. This may be because of physical or mental deterioration in my health, which makes me unable to communicate my views, or because I am permanently unconscious. I understand that I may change my mind at any time, and I will aim to review this document regularly to check that I still agree with it. I understand that I cannot demand any particular treatment, ask for anything against the law (such as euthanasia or assisted suicide); refuse the offer of food and drink by mouth or refuse the use of measures solely designed to maintain my comfort and dignity such as appropriate pain relief, and basic nursing care essential to keep me comfortable such as washing, bathing and mouth care.

I am writing this Living Will as an Advance Directive, and declare that I understand its scope, and am mentally and physically capable of making the decisions contained in it.

I have not been influenced or harassed by anyone else when preparing it. My wishes are set out below.

FULL NAME

Date of birth

Current address

.....

.....

Nat. Ins. number

Name and address

of GP

.....

Name and address of primary contact(s) – health care proxy(s) (*the person(s) you would like to be contacted to approve the decisions of medical personnel if required by your Living Will*):

Name

Contact address

.....

Telephone number

or

Name

Contact address

.....

Telephone number

My wishes are as follows: I do, however, accept palliative care, including medication, to relieve distressing symptoms such as restlessness or pain, and to retain my dignity as far as possible.

(Delete in each case the alternative 1) or 2) which is not applicable)

A) If I (a) have a severe physical illness and/or a severe mental illness and (b) am unable to participate effectively in decisions about my medical care, and (c) there is very little chance that I will recover in the opinion of two independent medical practitioners,

- 1)** **I do not wish** to be kept alive by artificial means, or to have medical procedures to prolong my life **or**
- 2)** **I do wish** to be kept alive for as long as is reasonably possible using whatever form of medical treatment is available

B) If I become and remain unconscious for months or more, and in the opinion of two independent medical practitioners am not likely to recover,

- 1)** **I do not wish** to be kept alive by artificial means, or to have medical procedures to prolong my life **or**
- 2)** **I do wish** to be kept alive for as long as is reasonably possible using whatever form of medical treatment is available.

Appendix B – Assisted Dying

C) I have specific wishes in certain circumstances named below:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Your signature
(witnessed)

Date

For the witnesses:-

I declare that when the maker signed this document he/she understood what it meant and that, as far as I am aware, no pressure has been put on the maker and that he/she has made it by his/her own wish

Witness 1 *

Signature

Contact details

.....

Witness 2 *

Signature

Contact details

.....

** Witnesses must be 18 or over but not a partner, spouse, relative or anyone else who stands to benefit under the maker's ordinary will*

Review dates and signature:-

Notes

- 1) Living Wills are recognised as being legally enforceable by the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the General Medical Council and the Law Society.
- 2) Your Living Will should be discussed if possible with your family, your Medical Practitioner and your 'advocate'. Copies should be deposited with each of them, and you should keep a copy in your papers. You may like to carry a card saying that you have a Living Will, and where it can be found.
- 3) This form applies to England and Wales only. In Scotland a similar procedure is known as 'A Welfare Power of Attorney', which must be granted by the Donor while he or she is mentally competent, and registered by the Donor at the Office of the Public Guardian. The above form could perhaps be adapted.
- 4) A new document is due to be introduced shortly for England and Wales called a Lasting Power of Attorney, but is not yet available.
- 5) The United Reformed Church does not accept liability for the use of this form.

Appendix C

Parish Nursing

The title 'Parish Nurse' is widely used and recognised in North America where nurses operate across denominations and across faiths. In Britain, the term is less familiar. A Parish Nurse might operate within a local church context and provide a number of services that could be summarised as being medically informed pastoral care and health promotion within a spiritual context. Below is an example of a job description for a parish nurse who might operate within Britain.

1. Health Educator

The Parish Nurse will find all sorts of ways of promoting health in the congregation and local community, for example by organising health-care teaching with parent-toddler groups, exercise classes with the elderly, stress management courses with business professionals, or by participating in teaching on drugs, alcohol and sex education with youth groups. Such classes could be in church buildings or beyond. The Parish Nurse will also be concerned about environmental and safety issues and First Aid facilities relating to the church and local community, and will encourage church members to take appropriate actions.

2. Personal Health Counsellor

The Parish Nurse will organise clinic sessions at the church building or elsewhere, when blood pressure checks, weight management, and personal health advice are freely available to everyone in the congregation and community who wishes to attend. In addition s/he will make supportive visits to people who are in particular need because of family illness, bereavement, redundancy or other problems. S/he will also provide health care advice for colleagues in ministry and leadership within the church.

3. Referral Agent

Where necessary the Parish Nurse will make referrals to GPs, dieticians, physiotherapists, counsellors, social service departments and voluntary bodies as appropriate. This will require the development of good local relationships with other health care professionals and wide knowledge of local voluntary organisations.

4. Trainer and Co-ordinator of Volunteers

When a family in the church or community is in need of extra practical care, the Parish Nurse will train and co-ordinate volunteers to help. Unlike many NHS nurses, the Parish Nurse is in communication with many people who want to volunteer but do not know how to get involved appropriately. The Parish Nurse will run First Aid courses in order to equip people to provide practical care in emergencies.

5. Developer of Support Groups

The Parish nurse will identify needs for self-help support and develop groups such as stroke clubs, single parent groups, twins groups, bereavement care groups and so on. The church building may or may not be appropriate for these, but the spiritual and physical elements of health will feature in their programmes.

6. Health Advocate

The Parish Nurse will accompany clients to hospital appointments if desired, and act as advocate for them in all their dealings with health institutions.

7. Integrator of Faith and Health

Prayer and discussion of spiritual issues will form a part of most of the Parish Nurse's interactions with clients so that wholeness of mind, body and spirit are the perceived aims of interventions. The Parish Nurse will be recognised by the church as part of the ministry staff team, even if working in a voluntary capacity.

For more information about parish nursing, go to www.parishnursing.co.uk

Appendix D

Christian Healing Ministry: a brief introduction

There is no one single definition of healing ministry for it encompasses so many aspects of life. It is a biblically based ministry and is seen as the response of the churches to Jesus' commission to preach the gospel and heal the sick. It is about meeting people at their point of need, and helping them on their journey to wholeness.

Healing, wholeness and salvation: These words embrace what God has done for us through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The New Testament shows us that Jesus' healing of the sick and casting out demons were a vivid demonstration of the coming of the kingdom, and his charge to continue that ministry in his name was part of his commission to his disciples.

- This ministry is in response to Jesus' commission.
- There is the recognition that all healing comes from God and we believe that he works through his body on earth, and so through faith, prayers, and actions we can be part of that process to bring healing and wholeness in body, mind, spirit and the emotions.
- It is the seeking of harmony with God, self, others, environment and creation.
- It is a journey towards living life to the full within our limitations (eg. age, state of health or situation).
- It is truly holistic, concerned with the health and wellbeing of the whole person within a web of relationships, a specific context and history.
- It encompasses and encourages the prayerful and practical support of the whole Christian community for individuals and families and communities experiencing sickness and suffering.
- In practical terms there is a very wide remit, for it embraces most aspects of life where there is brokenness and disease including physical illness, broken relationships, abuse, trauma and depression.
- There is a pastoral aspect, which co-operates with and recognises God working through the medical professions.
- Expression of God's love and compassion for all people and the recognition of his being present in suffering. It is wholly inclusive.
- Through this ministry, human suffering, sickness and healing are put into context, given meaning they could not have apart from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- The ministry of healing is eschatological; it offers healing of the Christian soul within the context of eternity and preparation into eternal life.

Healing ministry embraces forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ's reconciling work on the cross is central to forgiveness and reconciliation. This includes the need to return to the full health of right relationships, starting with the right relationship with God, and recognising our dependency.

Repentance, forgiveness and the dealing with guilt, anger, rebellion and resentment are key to this ministry. So many are angry with God, themselves, or others, and are severely burdened and diseased by the past. Much help is needed to bring some to the point where there can be healing and reconciliation and restoration.

In 2 Cor 5:17-20 we are urged to work towards reconciliation. In Col 1:20 there is a cosmic dimension to Christ's death on the cross; Jesus by his act, reconciled himself to all things whether on earth or in heaven. In Eph 2:16 reconciliation is seen as being supremely concerned with the healing of relationships. Reconciliation is the activity of God and man is the recipient.

The healing ministry works towards peace in the deepest sense of the word – the sense of well being that comes about when the will of God is being done, where there is a harmony of being at one with the purposes of God the creator. It embraces, prosperity, bodily health, contentedness, and good relations between people.

In practical terms for the church, it embraces:

- Pastoral care at all levels.
- Prayer, prayer groups, praying with people, healing services, sacraments, anointing, listening, preparation for death.
- Being involved in the community in whatever way is appropriate for the person and situation, with disabled, ethnic groups, elderly, marginalised, rejected, imprisoned, lonely, vulnerable, sick, terminally ill, bereaved, carers, victims and the frightened.
- Healing of memories.
- Deliverance ministry for people and places.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Healing services to bring healing and wholeness in the widest sense – not just seeking cures.

Questions asked:

- Are prayers answered? Yes, not always as we want or in our time, but they are answered in God's way and his time.
- Are people physically healed? Yes but not always. We don't know why some are physically healed and others are not. Often healing is not immediate but comes as a package: change of heart, lifestyle, seeking of forgiveness, medical intervention and prayer.
- Do miracles still happen? Yes, peoples' lives change against all the odds.
- What is the usual response to healing? To go and tell others and serve the Lord, and live life to the full. There is a new joy and excitement as people experience the living God and become powerful witnesses.

Useful books on the Healing Ministry

A Time to Heal (a manual), Church House Publishing 2000. ISBN 07151383

Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, Hodder and Stoughton 1997. ISBN 0340661402

Francis MacNutt, *The Prayer that Heals*, Ave Maria Press. 2005. ISBN 1594710554

Agnes Sanford, *Healing Gifts of the Spirit*, Arthur James 1979. ISBN 0853052107

Randolf Vickers, *The Anointing to Heal*, Terra Nova Publications 2005. ISBN 1901949389

John Gunstone, *A Touching Place*, Canterbury Press 2005. ISBN 1853116319

Healed, Restored, Forgiven. Prayers and Liturgies, Canterbury Press 2004.
ISBN 1853115878

R T Kendall, *Total Forgiveness*, Hodder and Stoughton 2001. ISBN 034075639X

Nicky Gumbel, *Why does God allow suffering*, Kingsway 1999. ISBN 0854768629

Ian Cowie, *Jesus healing works and ours*, Wild Goose Publications (Iona Community) 2000. ISBN 1901557278

Ruth Burgess and Kathy Galloway (eds.), *Praying for the Dawn*, Wild Goose Publications (Iona Community) 2000. ISBN 190155726X

Study Guide

This Study Guide has been produced for use with the report on Assisted Dying. The subject is complex and there are no easy answers to the problems associated with end of life issues, suffering and death. The Guide is designed for small group discussion, and is in seven parts which can be used over a series of sessions. Each section looks at particular issues to do with assisted dying, and includes reflections, biblical references and questions for group conversations, and relates directly to a section in the report on Assisted Dying.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. A Reformed view
3. Suffering, dying and fears associated with end of life issues
4. Practical considerations
5. The elderly
6. Living wills – advance directives
7. Where do we go from here?

Suggestions for use

Each module can be used as a basis for discussion for one session or more, depending upon interest and circumstances. It is suggested that each session commences with prayer and a Bible reading. There is a prayer at the beginning of each section which you may find helpful. Some of the issues are very delicate and may become personal and distressing. Be sensitive to one another and respect differing views, experiences and feelings. Pastoral follow-up may be needed after discussing some of the issues.

Make a note of your thoughts, ideas and concerns as you go along, the issues to pray about, and what, if any, changes you would like to see within the church, community, society, family, amongst friends and from yourself. May it be an enriching experience.

1. INTRODUCTION

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for giving us this opportunity to spend time together to discuss the complex issues about life and death and the mystery of suffering. Give us grace to listen to one another with open minds and be understanding when others have differing views from ourselves.

May we discern your words of wisdom, your truths as your Holy Spirit moves amongst us. May we be aware of your loving presence as we seek your guidance through the scriptures, prayers, and listening to one another.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Where O death is your victory? Where O death is your sting? 1 Corinthians 15:55

See Sections 1-3 of the report and case studies.

If someone you loved was suffering unbearably, had lost their quality of life, and dignity, and wanted to die...what would you want for them?

Would you be assured that they would be called home in God's good time?

Or would you want to help them towards a gentle release? The answer isn't easy.

For Christians, ethical and moral dilemmas rarely are.

Some seek clear theological guidance; others are influenced by traumatic personal experience.

Assisted Dying – the notion that people of sound mind, who are terminally ill and suffering unbearably might receive medical help to end their lives – has become an issue of hot debate. Although an attempt to legalise this was defeated in the House of Lords in 2006, it is sure to re-emerge (2.1).

As Christians, we see death as an ultimate healing. Many feel there is a time to die, and that it might not be right to use medical advances to keep people alive artificially, when all quality of life is gone. But there are real concerns about positive action being taken to end life. During the House of Lords debate, the Archbishop of Canterbury said:

"Whether or not you believe that God enters into consideration, it remains true that to specify ...conditions under which it would be both reasonable and legal to end your life, is to say that certain kinds of human life are not worth living (2.2)."

Dignity in Dying (formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society) takes the view that health care professionals frequently break the law, out of compassion and respect for the wishes of terminally ill patients, and the choice is:

"...not between permitting and preventing medically assisted dying.

The choice is between making medically assisted dying visible and regulated, or allowing it to continue 'underground' without any safeguards, transparency or accountability(3.7)."

Questions

1. **Have you had personal experience of a loved one suffering, and of wondering whether it would be better if death intervened? Did faith help in your situation?**
2. **Do you believe that human life was given by God, and should therefore only be taken by God, in God's good time?**
3. **Do you see circumstances in which the power to assist in a person's death might be misused – by medical staff or by family?**
4. **What about the view of Dignity in Dying that it happens anyway, and it would be better if it were regulated?**
5. **Do you see a distinction between assisting a person to die and keeping someone alive artificially? Do you agree with Arthur Hugh Clough? He said *Thou shalt not kill, but needst not strive, officiously to keep alive* (5).**

Different views are more fully explained on various websites: (See 12. Sources of Further Information).

2. A REFORMED VIEW

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for creating the world in all its richness and beauty, and that we are a part of your creation, and have been given the gift of life. You have given us communities, families and friends in which to live and grow, may we seek to understand more of your truths so that we may use our time and our lives wisely, to your glory. Help us to value life, and know that when the time comes, death is not the end, but a new beginning still surrounded by your love. Give us the grace and wisdom to be open to discern your truth and will for your people, and in the midst of suffering know your love. In the name of Jesus Amen.

See Section 4 of the report.

The section of the Church and Society report entitled 'A Reformed View' is an attempt to identify some of the central theological and ethical issues at stake in the assisted dying debate and to ask how a Christian Church in the Reformed tradition should respond to those issues. This section of the study guide offers some more general comments about how the Reformed tradition might shape our moral living, thinking and decision-making. This might help explain some of the thinking behind the more specific arguments in the report.

The United Reformed Church 'acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people' ⁽¹⁾. This formula identifies a central role for our Scriptures in shaping our doctrine and ethics. It also, deliberately, admits of a wide range of interpretations of Scripture and understandings of the nature of its authority. It allows a role for other sources (usually summarised as tradition, reason and experience) in theological and ethical thinking, and allows for a certain amount of prayerful improvisation on the part of a believer, or believing community, faced with new situations and questions.

When 'discerning the Word of God in Scripture', we need to remember that the biblical writings come from very different historical and social contexts from ours, and might not directly address our questions and concerns. We will not find within the Bible any formula for addressing the hard questions of contemporary medical ethics. In addressing these questions, the Bible functions most importantly in what New Testament scholar Richard Hays calls a 'symbolic world' mode ⁽²⁾. That is to say, it informs the Christian community's vision of the world, its relation to God, and our place within it, re-shaping the community's moral imagination along the lines of that biblical world-view. This re-shaping of the moral imagination happens (or should happen) centrally in the worship and shared life of the Christian community.

As Christians participate in the Church's worship and corporate life, this should enable them to grow in Christian character and to develop virtues, including a kind of 'practical wisdom' informed by faith, that will help them to live and act well in the morally testing situations which they encounter. This approach suggests that faithful Christian living will indeed involve an element of moral improvisation in response to new situations, but this does not mean that everything is up for negotiation. Some hold the view that Christian ethics does include moral principles and rules that are absolute and exceptionless, or as near as makes no difference.

It is possible to outline some features of a biblically-shaped 'symbolic world' that are particularly relevant to the issue of assisted dying:

(1) United Reformed Church Basis of Union, para. 12.

(2) Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997

Human life, in common with the whole material world, is created by God, who loves it and has pronounced it 'very good'. However, human life and the world are flawed and alienated from God in profound and complex ways (in traditional Christian language, 'fallen'). But God has responded decisively to this predicament, offering humanity and the world, the hope of healing, reconciliation and ultimate fulfilment in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Because humans are God's creatures, our life is not our own, but is given to us as a loan or gift by God; this understanding lies, for example, behind the biblical prohibition of murder.

Because every human is one of God's beloved creatures, for whom Christ died, every human life has great and unconditional value. No human life, however limited, damaged or dependent, is beyond the reach of God's love. This should make us highly suspicious of the claim, often made in discussions of medical ethics, that some human lives are not worth living, or that some human individuals have less of a claim to our respect and protection than others.

However, it would be misleading to talk of human life in this world as having an 'absolute' or 'infinite' value: Christians have not usually thought that human lives should always be prolonged at all costs. Indeed, the Christian tradition of honouring martyrs suggests that there are situations in which it is wrong to cling to life. The Christian faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ means that our hope is not 'for this life only' (1 Cor 15:19), and that God's loving care for us does not cease with our death.

A major theme in the Bible is God's covenant relationships with humankind, and with particular communities (notably Israel and the Church); this leads some Christian ethicists to think of particular human relationships, including marriage, family life and professional/patient relationships in health care, as covenant relationships that call for particular virtues and impose particular obligations.

Questions

- 1. What does it mean to be created by God and how does that relate to our attitudes towards life and death?**
- 2. What do we understand by a covenant relationship with God? How do we honour that relationship with God?**
- 3. How do we value human life? Does the value of a human life ever become worthless?**

3. SUFFERING, DYING AND FEARS ASSOCIATED WITH END OF LIFE ISSUES

Prayer

We give thanks Lord, that we have come together to think and talk about the great mysteries of suffering and death. We thank you that you have an everlasting love for us, and that you want us to love and care for others.

We are often afraid to talk about suffering and dying because we do not know the answers to these mysteries and we are fearful in case we upset others and unsettle ourselves. May your Holy Spirit guide us as we look at the scriptures and speak with one another. Help us to understand more of your love for us and for all people and give us insights into the mysteries of suffering and death and take away our fear. Help us in our discussions to be sensitive to one another's feelings and help us to know how we should act as individuals and as a church or group in respect of end of life issues.

Thank you that you died and suffered and rose again for us, so that we may know more about the mystery of death and life everlasting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Bible Reading

Luke 10: 25-37. Mark 12: 28-34. Matthew 19: 16-19. James 5: 13-16

See Sections 4.3 – 5 of the report, and most other sections. Also see case studies and Appendix D (healing ministry).

This is not a subject that can be addressed in isolation for we live in communities, thus it relates to the whole of the report and the Appendices. However we will endeavour to focus on just a few aspects in this section to try to unravel our understanding of suffering and our response to it.

Our responses to these issues will be informed by our faith, the teaching we have received and our own experiences. By listening to one another you may come to a different understanding and to see things from a different perspective.

First, let us look at suffering from the theological perspective highlighted in section 4.3 of the report which addresses suffering; you may find it helpful to re-read that section (or read it aloud if you are in a group).

Questions

- 1. What does loving your neighbour mean?**
- 2. What is suffering? Is it only physical or are there other forms of suffering? Can we see suffering in isolation?**
- 3. Are we afraid of suffering for ourselves or others? If so, how does that affect our response to suffering?**

'Thou shalt not kill' is one of the ten commandments. Our dilemma is how to respond to extreme suffering and pain, especially when the patient requests help and when complete relief is not possible, to help or allow the patient to die. Here we enter the realm of palliative care and hospices (see module 4 of this Study Guide), Living Wills (module 6) and social and political matters (module 1).

Share with one another any experiences of suffering you feel relevant.

In your opinion was this dealt with in the best possible way?

If not, how could it have been dealt with differently?

Were you involved in any decision making?

From the pastoral and practical perspective look again at section 5.7 of the report (if you are in a group, you could read it out loud).

This gives the church many things to discuss in respect of how we respond to caring for sufferers in practical ways. The Lord taught us and showed us how to pray, in James 5: 13-16 we are urged to pray when anyone is in trouble, it is something we are all called to do as Christians.

Much will depend on individual circumstances. You may like to discuss:

1. Do we pray enough? If not, how could we encourage one another to pray for others?
2. If all resources were available, money, time, people, expertise, etc., how would we aim to alleviate suffering?
3. With the resources we have, what should be our priorities in our community, or nationally?
4. What do you think of the idea of parish nursing? Is it relevant for your area? (See Appendix C).
5. The Healing Ministry encompasses all aspects of life. Can you see areas where it operates in your church already and might it be developed further? (See Appendix D).

If you would like further information contact your Synod Adviser for the Healing Ministry or see the recommended book list at the end of Appendix D).

You might like to make notes of your responses to these questions.

Take time to pray about all you have discussed and be pastorally sensitive to those in the group who have not found this subject easy.

4. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prayer

Loving God, we thank you that you have gathered us here to think about and discuss the issues of illness and suffering at the end of life. We ask that your Holy Spirit may guide our words and thoughts so that we are in tune with your will. Show us how best to care for those near death, enabling them to know they are loved and valued in surroundings in which they are comfortable and pain free. Help us to be mindful too, of the lonely, frightened and hurting people who have no one to love them or bring relief. In our modern society, show us how we determine the right time to die when someone is suffering, and how best we can care for them. Help us all to value life and live each day to the full within our limitations of age and health. May we remember that death is not the end but a new beginning with you, surrounded by your love In Jesus' name, Amen.

See Section 5 of the report, case studies, Appendix C (parish nursing) and D (healing ministry).

Bible Reading

John 14: 27 (14-27) John 13: 12-17 (1-17) Romans 12: 1-19

Re-read paragraph 5.1 of the report. If you are in a group, it might help to read this aloud.

This gives us profound dilemmas as Christians as we seek to follow Christian teaching and view the situation in perspective and give meaningful and helpful support and comfort. Our natural instinct is to offer pastoral care, but sometimes even that feels beyond us in the most extreme of situations, and we flounder.

What can we do in these sad and prolonged situations of terminal decline? Our pastoral response will depend on whether the patient is at home, in hospital or in a hospice or nursing home, whether there is a large supportive family or just one carer, or no family. Also the wishes of the patient and family must be respected when they prefer not to have visitors.

As Christians we recognise we are made up of body, mind and spirit, and we function in relationships. There are many types of suffering, not just physical, and when addressing end of life issues we must heed the necessity to address not just physical, but also spiritual, mental and emotional needs. This brings us to peace of mind which is important at all stages of life, and especially at the time of death. (Refer to 5.3).

Visiting the terminally ill is not always easy, and many shy away from it, though training can be helpful. The length of the visit and the timing has to be carefully gauged, and sometimes 'just being there', is enough.

Appropriate conversation can be valued, but most of all the person still needs to be treated as a person, not an illness, to have their needs and dignity respected. The pastoral visitor must be sufficiently aware to listen and meet them at their point of need.

Appropriate prayers, visits, practical help and the opportunity for the patient to talk to someone confidentially about the big issues, personal confessions, the meaning of life and death, etc. to have someone to pray with them and bring Holy Communion may help to bring peace of mind.

Palliative care is managing and relieving extreme pain and discomfort through medication and appropriate care. Hospitals can offer excellent end of life palliative care but are often too busy to devote the time to long-term terminally ill patients.

The hospice movement offers specialist palliative care for the terminally ill at home, in a hospice, special hospital unit or care home. This is usually excellent, with the patient receiving expert pain relief, care with the emotional and practical needs of family and friends being met as well. Hospices are usually quieter than hospitals with staff having time and training to deal with end of life issues. Through the trained chaplains, appropriate spiritual care is offered; this can bring peace of mind to both patient and family and friends.

Chaplains in all these situations have an important role in bringing spiritual help and comfort to the suffering and dying. However, there is insufficient capacity to cope with all who are terminally ill (see paragraph 5.5 and section 8 of the Report). Inevitably some die in hospital alone, in geriatric wards where staff are busy.

For those looking after dementia sufferers, there is an even greater problem, how and where best to care for them, especially when other terminal illnesses add to the problem? (These issues are explored further in module 5 of this Study Guide.)

There are no easy or universal answers. Each group discussing these issues will have their own experiences to draw on. You might find it helpful to look at the responses to the questionnaire (Appendix A) at this stage, as many are relevant to the practical considerations raised.

Questions

- 1. What are Christian responsibilities when it comes to caring for the terminally ill? Do we tailor our responses to the situation i.e. when the patient has a large supportive family and friends or when there is no family at all? Look at the case studies and draw on your own experiences.**
- 2. Take a look at Appendix C on Parish Nursing. Could this be helpful when addressing end of life issues?**
- 3. In your experience, is hospice care widely available or are there limitations in the availability of places?**
- 4. Take a look at Appendix D on the Healing Ministry. Could you see this as an extension of pastoral care relevant to the situations we have been discussing?**
- 5. If there is a serious problem with care for someone who is terminally ill, what should we do, if anything? If there is no space in the hospice, what then? What are the issues to be considered before intervening?**
- 6. Hospices are often under-resourced. How can the church offer support?**
- 7. Do you liaise with, value and support your hospital chaplains in their special role?**
- 8. How can the church and individuals best support the patient, family, carers, chaplains and friends?**

5. THE ELDERLY

Prayer

O Lord God, look with mercy on all those whose increasing years bring them isolation, distress, or weakness. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace; give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help. And, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

See Section 6 of the report.

For many old people there is much time available, perhaps too much, to sit and ponder over their lives, with success and failure, opportunities taken and missed, relationships broken and not restored.

Malcolm Johnson highlights the 'anguish' which many old people endure in paragraph 6.4 of the report. He speaks of 'biographical pain', which includes promises made but unfulfilled, wrongs unable to be righted, leading to guilt and self-loathing:

"Some see this as unforgivable sin, others, with no belief, simply feel tortured. Yet they rarely find a sympathetic and safe listener to relieve this profound distress..."

The following meditation, 'Old Nun's Prayer' could provide the basis for a full discussion on the agonies of those who are growing old and dependent. It may be helpful to read it straight through, and then invite people in the group, or ourselves if alone, to recall situations with elderly relatives or friends who may have these thoughts – or indeed ourselves, whatever our age! It is in many ways a positive conversation with God, sorting out what is a good way to deal with old age!

Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older, and will some day be old. Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Keep my mind from the recital of endless details – give me wings to come to the point.

I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains.

Help me to endure them with patience. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains – they are increasing, and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be a saint – some of them are so hard to live with – but a sour old woman is one of the crowning works of the devil. Make me thoughtful – but not moody; helpful, but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all. But thou knowest Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Responses to the questionnaire raise further issues. Question 3 focused on the elderly: "Are we worried about becoming a burden, restricting the lives of carers, using up family resources and not getting good care?" (See Appendix A, 3.)

Questions

1. How can we as Christians ensure that people who are old and frail do not feel themselves to be a burden? What work is undertaken by us as individuals and churches to help old people to feel a) valued? b) secure?
2. How can our dignity be maintained if we become disabled, frail in mind, dependent? As God's people are all equal in his sight, created by him and, as Jesus taught, loved by him, do we have a special responsibility to care for the elderly?
3. What about Christian Homes and Nursing Homes – are there any in your area, and how are the churches involved? What worship services are held in Homes, Hospitals, and are special prayers and themes chosen?
4. How could we achieve the same standard of care for the elderly dying as is available in the Hospice Movement? There is no way at the present time that all those who need hospice care can have it. 'It should be a target to match exit standards with entry (maternity) standards' (Appendix A, 3.)

6. LIVING WILLS – ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Prayer

We thank you that we are a part of your creation. There is much we do not understand about life, death and suffering and thus we are sometimes fearful and unsure how to best deal with the end of life issues, especially when there is suffering in body, mind or spirit or all three. Some may have experienced suffering in others or caring for a loved one and one is aware of the strain and anxieties cast upon the carers. In our discussions, may your Holy Spirit direct and guide us and bring us comfort as to the way forward for ourselves and others. As we discuss Living Wills, may we be honest with ourselves and each other, about our fears of losing control of our lives and having suffering over which we have little or no control. We want to value life with all its richness and possibilities, but also want to recognise the right time to let go and not prolong suffering. We thank you that you gave your life for us and overcame death, and showed us that death is not the end, but after death we have everlasting life with you still surrounded by your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

See Section 7 of the report and the example of a Living Will (Appendix B).

The preparation of a Living Will can offer peace of mind to certain people, and assistance to medical practitioners who may be involved in their treatment. Take a look at the example of a Living Will in Appendix B.

It is becoming more common for individuals to record on a simple form what they wish to happen in their medical care in the future, especially near the end of life, if they are unable to convey their wishes to their carers, both medical and personal. This may be because they are physically and /or mentally incapacitated, or are unconscious. It concerns their wishes on whether or not they want to be resuscitated or kept alive artificially.

Study Guide – Assisted Dying

It is possible to write a simple signed statement, or there are various forms available to help. Appendix B is an example of such a form, or you may like to ask a solicitor to provide a more detailed document. The important thing is that others know that you have recorded your wishes, so it is a good idea to discuss it with your next of kin or a near friend, your GP, perhaps your solicitor, and give each a copy of the form, and also to have one available in your papers. It is not usually helpful to keep it with your Will! You will probably wish to ask someone to be your “health care proxy”, who would take part in decision-making on your behalf if the Living Will was needed.

It is at times when people have experienced the dying of loved ones or friends that the subject comes into focus, especially if the experience is not a good one.

When “DNR” (Do Not Resuscitate) is written on hospital notes without the knowledge of – or discussion with – the patient or relatives, distress is caused.

Confusion by some carers about what is euthanasia may cause unnecessary interference. If there is a Living Will that may help to avert this, but there is no guarantee that the patient’s wishes will be known or accepted.

Health workers on the whole welcome Living Will instructions as a factor in their choice of treatment, given the provisos of appropriateness at the time of decisions. Though these may have legal standing there is still uncertainty about how they should be interpreted. As litigation increases, especially in hospital, a written statement of the patient’s wishes can be very helpful to doctors and nurses in making correct choices of treatment, with the written Living Will to guide them.

Questions

- 1. What is a suitable time to bring up the subject of living wills with family and friends? Do you know anyone who has made one? Do you have experience, first- or second-hand, of caring for someone so incapacitated that you were consulted on decisions that must be made for them on artificial prolongation of life? Were these decisions difficult to make? Was there a Living Will available and if so, was it helpful?**
- 2. Are there dangers in persuading someone to fill in a form expressing their wishes? Might there be pressure on them to make a choice for the sake of others, which they did not really want? How can we explain that this is not euthanasia, (it is not helping the person to die), but accepting that it only applies if they would die if left without artificial aid, either medical or mechanical?**
- 3. What has our Christian faith to say about our making life-or-death decisions for: a) ourselves? b) others? Is modern medicine always helpful as it enables people to be kept alive artificially, indefinitely? There are continuing advances in transplant surgery – heart, lung, liver, kidney, face. Is there a limit to ethical use of transplants to prolong our natural lifespan? Are we in danger of interfering with God’s created order?**
- 4. If we believe in life after death why do we cling on to this mortal life in spite of sickness and suffering?**
- 5. Does the fact of Jesus’ miraculous healing affect our choice of artificially prolonging our life, in case we might undergo a miracle cure in the future? (Jairus’ daughter healed – St Mark’s Gospel chapter 5, the story of the raising of Lazarus – St John’s Gospel, chapter 11.)**

After this session, be pastorally sensitive and supportive to one another, especially if someone is caring for a loved one who is terminally ill, or who has had a recent diagnosis.

7. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Prayer

Gracious God, we give thanks for the richness of the discussions we have had. Thank you for opening our eyes to the many issues it has raised, and that as a group we have had the opportunity to share experiences, concerns and to think about issues in a new way. We ask that you will help us as we discuss ways forward, help us to focus on the real needs in our church, community, family and amongst our friends. May your Holy Spirit move amongst us as we seek to discern the way forward, as individuals, and as a group or church. May we seek to help others to have peace of mind and feel safe and loved as they face the end of life. Show us how to be your body here on earth. In Jesus' name, Amen

Reflect on your discussions and refer back to your notes. Are there any areas for prayer or change?

as a church
as a denomination
as a group of people
as an individual
as a family
ecumenically

Does anything need changing? Attitudes, procedures, level of care?

as a church
as a denomination
as a group of people
as an individual
as a family
ecumenically

What can I/we do? Are there any ideas for the next step?

as a church
as a denomination
as a group of people
as an individual
as a family
ecumenically

We live in a secular culture where many are afraid to talk of death. It is often remarked that, while the Victorians were shy of talking about sex but always ready to speak of death, we have the opposite tendency. But within our Christian faith there is plenty of space for talk of death. For some who are dying or facing the death of someone they love, the Church is a place where this cultural taboo is lifted and where, with relief, death can be spoken of. We say much about the death of Jesus and about what we believe his death means for us within God's love – the salvation of the world, the forgiveness of sins, and the defeat of death itself. We also speak about the

Study Guide – Assisted Dying

meaning of our own death and of the promise of eternal life, sometimes in terms of immortality, but predominantly in terms of resurrection. As Christian people, we also say a good deal about the meaning of life, about its sanctity and dignity, of how life itself is a gift from God and of how human beings are made in the image of God. We have begun to talk again about what it means to have a 'soul' (perhaps in response to a secular culture which mourns the loss of its 'soul'). Christian theology is rich in the language of life and death of its meaning.

At the same time Christian people, along with others, have been wrestling with the 'end of life' issues discussed in this report. We have often found it strikingly hard to make the connections between our theological talk, the language and hope of our faith, and the moral and practical questions of assisted dying and euthanasia. Sometimes people use theological arguments to defend an ethical position, but it is not always clear that the one necessarily leads to the other. Many argue that a belief in the sanctity of life means that it would be wrong to assist anyone to die. But before we reach that conclusion we must ask what it means to say that life is holy. It may indeed mean that life is God's gift to us, but does that mean that we may play no part in taking decisions over its end? (Christians are still divided, for example, over whether a recognition that life is God's gift permits or forbids the use of contraception).

It could be argued that God has given us our lives, but also invites us to make mature decisions about them, in ways which are also in response to a holy responsibility. If we are stewards of creation, are we not stewards of our own lives? Also, we have to think carefully about what it means to affirm that death is defeated. In many Christian traditions death is the ultimate enemy, while for others it may also be considered a friend – or simply the marking point of a transition from one life to another. What would this mean for making decisions at the end of life? It may not be at all or obviously clear! Again, you might think it straightforward to conclude that Christians should never choose death for themselves, but trust God to choose the time. But this is not quite how Christian martyrs have seen the issue. When Christian discipleship is often seen as a growing into maturity, the maturity of Christ even, then what do we say about serious choices over life and death? Some might say that to assist anyone in dying is to 'play God'. But what then do we make of the biblical insight that we are made 'in the image of God'? It is often assumed that theological reflection on these issues leads only in one – obvious – direction, but that is an oversimplification.

Within this paper a range of views about this subject are presented. Malcolm Johnson's views are rooted in theology as much as Neil Messer's, for example. But they come to different conclusions. Is it that one is wrong and the other right, or that both reveal what the other neglects, so that we can see, as we hold them together, a more nuanced view? It is our hope and prayer that the report, and the study guide, has helped inform and equip you on your own Christian journey and in choices you may be called to make.

Our Mission

Commitment for Life works for justice, for hope and for the future. We work through Christian Aid and the World Development Movement. The story of Amina Begum illustrates why we make a connection between our faith and lifestyle. The Bible is full of stories that show us how to treat our neighbour in response to God's love for us. As we are reminded in Galatians 5:14 "Love your neighbour as yourself."



Amina's family have been forced to move three times already as slowly, inexorably the River Padma (Ganges) has pushed them back. And each time they move they lose more than just their house – they lose security, money and hope for the future.

Amina remembers the forced moves all too well. "Since we first lost our land to the river, we never had enough food or clothes for us," she says. It is because of CCDB's* work and the family's own determination that they are getting back on their feet again.

"I got a CCDB loan to buy two goats." Amina says. "They have had two kids. We'll probably sell the goats and invest the money. Before I joined CCDB, I had no money to save. Now I will have something to fall back on."

But nothing is certain for Amina and she fears for the future. "This place is only about 1.5km from the river bank so one day it will be taken too. Nobody can predict when it will happen, so we are saving some money so that we can buy land somewhere else. The trouble is we can't go too far because the land further away costs so much money."

CCDB continues to work to help those affected by climate change in Bangladesh – those who have done next to nothing to contribute to the problem but are paying an unfairly high price as their homes and livelihoods are destroyed.

Christian Aid/Amanda Farrant

*Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh

Campaigning

Supporters showed their support for justice issues through:-

- 'The Beat Goes on' events – July 2006
- 'The Beat Goes on' Rally – September 2006
- Stop Climate Chaos Rally – November 2006
- Trade Justice Action against EPA's – April 2007
- Sending postcards and letters on concerns about trade, debt, HIV/AIDS and climate change.
- Raising awareness of issues through worship and events.

Working Ecumenically

- Through the AIDS group. The Christmas resource 'Cry of the Child' highlighted stories and actions.
- For peace and reconciliation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This issue is given voice through Moving Stories, our monthly e-publication. The annual Israel/Palestine Activist Day allowed people to explore the situation whilst many of our activists attended the Lobby of Parliament for Palestine, in November.
- Advocates and other church members took part in the Ecumenical World Development Conference in March where the theme of 'How our Lifestyles impact on the global south' introduced delegates to development issues related to climate change.
- With other agencies e.g Operation Noah, Methodist Relief and Development Agency.

Support and Education

- Through partner countries updates, leaflets, posters and the e-publication 'Stories for Change,' we hope to give local churches a deeper understanding of life in our four partner countries, Bangladesh, Jamaica, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Zimbabwe. All have had turbulent times and need our support through prayer, action and giving.
- By increasing awareness of the effect our carbon footprint is having on the world's poor. Our resolution to General Assembly challenges churches to cut their carbon emissions as well as campaigning for change (see 'Cut your Carbon' leaflet and 'On the Water's Edge' booklet).
- Through our convener, sub committee, advocates and link people who play a vital role and to whom we offer grateful thanks. We would love to hear from anyone who would consider being an advocate.
- Through the FURY group who continue to share with congregations the hope that Christian Aid partners give in Jamaica.
- During the year we have welcomed:-
Novlet Dougherty-Reid (Jamaica AIDS Support for Life).
David Baroi (Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh)
Vuyisile Ndlovu (Christian Care, Zimbabwe)

Statistics

- Number of churches in scheme: 643.
- Amount raised, £556,000, of which 75% goes to Christian Aid, 10% to World Development Movement and 15% for administration of the scheme and grant giving.
- In 2006 grants given to:-
Baby Milk Action, Banana Link, DEA, EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompanier Programme in Israel and Palestine), Fairtrade Foundation, Father Dieter's Inauguration (Silveira House), Jubilee Debt Campaign, Landmine Action, Lebanon Appeal, One World Week, Operation Noah, People and Planet and Trade Justice Movement.
- The main database now shows 660 Fairtrade Churches from all 13 Synods.

Looking Ahead

We would encourage all congregations to join the scheme. None of the development and campaigning could be done without the exceptional committed giving from our churches. It would be wonderful if we could raise the total in 2007. This would really help both Christian Aid and the WDM in their campaigns for climate justice, for those who have done little to add to the problem but already are suffering the consequences.

People, Places and Presence

People

Our **young people** are an encouragement to us. The depth of faith and boundless energy they displayed at the seventh 'Mission Means Me' (MMM) weekend was heartening. We give thanks for them and their leaders and look to them for hope and encouragement in becoming the Church God is calling us to be.

We are going through a time of changes in personnel, with several **ministers** reaching retirement age. We know that this is going to be a feature of the whole church over the next five years, but we are already beginning to realise the loss of their mature wisdom. We also have several ministers going through the process of seeking early retirement on the grounds of ill health. The stresses on ministers are not unique, but we feel for those for whom ministry has become impossible, and who face an earlier end to their active service than they had hoped.

We are deeply grateful for the service that has been given by faithful and gifted members of the synod, including Irene Wren our **Synod Clerk** for the last six years, and we hope that those who take their place will be as wise and inspired.

Places

We are blessed by having a number of new and refurbished churches which are beacons of promise. 'The Crossing' in Worksop, a united church with the Methodists, has a prime site on the high street and uses it to the full with a café, and community centre. Newport Pagnell Church has a delightful worship area as a result of their refurbishment. The March Synod was held there and the hospitality was warm and encouraging. Sleaford Church has, after a struggle to obtain funding, begun its redevelopment of its frontage onto the high street. It will become a "Multi Use Centre" for the benefit of the community. A Multi Use Centre is a place where organisations can promote their services in one location either in a face to face situation or through the provision of advice and information leaflets. This will be one of a network of Multi Use Centres being developed in Lincolnshire whereby rural communities can benefit from increased services. Crossways at Yardley Hastings is a synod project focusing on youth and children, rural and small churches and spirituality. Derek Hopkins is the Director and an exciting programme is being developed. See the website www.crosswayscentre.org.uk

Across the southern area of the Synod there is a swathe of new housing planned over the next twenty years, from **Milton Keynes to Wellingborough**. With our ecumenical partners we are being helped to respond to this new mission opportunity by the special ministries of Bob Purser in Northamptonshire and Tim Norwood in Milton Keynes. But there are other developments too which require our attention, like the continued growth of supply chain industry distribution centres across the midlands and elsewhere. A new ministry is being created based at the **Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal and with Lutterworth United Reformed Church**, which has involved negotiations across Synod, and ecumenical boundaries. But rural areas are also facing changes and the strong ecumenical partnership in **Churches Together in All Lincolnshire**, which includes Ground Level, means that 'fresh expressions' of church are to be found across the whole of the synod, not just in urban areas.

Presence

In **Leicester**, we are partners in an ecumenical project to empower Christians to be a more positive presence in that multi-faith and multi-cultural city. **The St Philip's Centre** arises from the Church of England programme of 'presence and engagement', but in Leicester it has become a fully ecumenical venture, with the United Reformed Church providing a full-time member of staff in Clare Downing.

However, there are places where we as the United Reformed Church are **not present**. One of the intriguing possibilities in the Catch the Vision process is to consider initiating new work where we have not been for a long time. Asking our ecumenical partners what the United Reformed Church could offer to a town where we are present through members and ministers but not through a local church, would be a challenge to them and to us.

'Where is the Synod located?' is one of the questions of presence that has been raised in the new synod consultations. Most seem to assume that it is in the Synod office in Nottingham. But our new communications exercise through revitalized web-site, and fortnightly e-letter tries to encourage people to see that the synod is all over the East Midlands. Each place is connected and contributes to the communications web.

Points to ponder

- How can we best realise the potential of the leaders in our church, e.g. workers with children and young people, pastoral carers, local church leaders, lay preachers and worship teams, Church Related Community Workers and Ministers?
- How well equipped is the United Reformed Church to be able to respond to new opportunities?
For a long time all our new churches have been ecumenical. Could we open a new congregation of the United Reformed Church? How could we go about doing that?
- To what extent is there a strong regional presence of the United Reformed Church? How does a regional presence relate to local awareness of United Reformed Church congregations and our image in the media?

Heritage Lottery Fund

Document 1

Document 1

Document 1

1. Introduction

1.1 A resolution carried at General Assembly 2006 asked that Assembly reconsider its position in respect of applications for Lottery funding, in the light of diminishing government funding available for the upkeep and repair of historic church buildings – especially buildings formally listed as being of special historic or architectural interest – and the diverse way in which the Lottery is now being used to fund other agencies and sources of financial support. Mission Council asked the Church and Society Committee to prepare a briefing with a recommendation to be brought to Assembly 2007.

1.2 In September 2006, the Church and Society committee expressed the provisional view that the committee should propose that the Church alter its stance to allow applications for lottery funding for this specific purpose. A paper explaining the background, and why the committee had come to this view, was approved by Mission Council (with slight amendment) on 27 January. The paper appears below, as amended.

1.3 Assistance has been given by a number of people, but particularly by members of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group, the Church and Society Committee and the Joint Public Issues Team (Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed).

2. History

2.1 1995: Assembly passed the following resolution: Assembly urges members and councils of the Church to disassociate themselves from the Lottery:
a) by refusing to buy tickets; and b) by declining to apply for Lottery-generated funds for church purposes.

2.2 1997: The Church and Society Committee was asked to interpret the 1995 resolution. It suggested that where an application for lottery funding was more broadly based than from a single church, and where it sought funding for projects to benefit the whole community (and not merely or primarily the church and its organisations) this did not breach the spirit of what Assembly had determined.

2.3 June 2004: Synod Moderators received a letter from Assembly Listed Buildings Advisory Group with an enclosure from English Heritage, which made it clear that public funding for Grade 2 listed buildings now came entirely from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

2.4 November 2004: Church and Society Committee felt the English Heritage position gave the Church little room to manoeuvre and that it might be time for the 1995 resolution to be re-visited – albeit after a protest had been lodged with English Heritage – but that this should be a decision for Assembly, with advice from Mission Council.

2.5 January 2005: Mission Council noted that the 1995 resolution merely “urged” and did not “require” churches to disassociate themselves from the Lottery and that there was no need, at present, to alter the Church’s 1995 policy.

2.6 February 2005: Church and Society Committee decided that Mission Council’s view should be noted in the Church and Society report to Assembly, together with a re-statement of general opposition to proposed new gambling legislation. In the event, this appears not to have happened, probably because there was no Church and Society Secretary in post.

3. Listed Churches

3.1 Anyone can request that a building be listed. The application for listing is dealt with by English Heritage (or in Wales and Scotland by Cadw or Historic Scotland). Recommendations are confirmed by the relevant Secretary of State. An order cannot be contested, which is a source of concern to some, who believe that the owners of the building should be able to make representations. Once a building is listed, it cannot be demolished, or altered in any way that would change its character, without consent; the owners are required to keep it in good repair. In the case of United Reformed Church buildings, consent is (except in the case of total demolition) sought through the Church's ecclesiastical exemption control procedure. There are three categories of listing:

Grade 1	Buildings of exceptional interest
Grade 2*	Particularly important buildings of more than special interest
Grade 2	Buildings of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them

For details see: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/conWebDoc.2422>

In Scotland, the three categories are:

Cat. A:	Buildings of national or international importance
Cat. B:	Buildings of regional or more than local importance
Cat. C(S):	Buildings of local importance

For details see:

<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/historicbuildings/hsandlistedbuildings.htm>

3.2 Under the authority of Mission Council, the URC's Listed Buildings Advisory Group works with synod property committees in England and Wales to ensure that aspects of conservation and planning law are properly observed in relation to listed buildings. (In Scotland, the United Reformed Church works through the Scottish Churches' Committee). Although practices may differ within synods as to the duties exercised by the local church, the Listed Buildings Advisory Group believes that in most cases it would be the elders of a local church, who would have responsibility for ensuring that a listed church was protected and properly maintained – and more generally for ensuring that a local church complies with the legislation. Synod trustees are required to ensure that local churches are aware of their responsibilities, that information is dispersed to local churches, and to be available to give advice. Appendix Three on page 182 & 183 of the General Assembly Book of Reports 2006 sets out the responsibilities of the different councils of the Church. It states:

It is a function of the elders' meeting to recommend to the church meeting, arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings, and of the church meeting to make, or provide for the making of, such arrangements.

3.3 A complete figure for the number of listed United Reformed Church church buildings is:

England and Wales:		Scotland:	
Grade 1	3 (see footnote) ¹	Category B	12
Grade 2*	25	Category A	2 (see footnote) ²
Grade 2	309	Category C(S)	5

3.4 Whilst, it is sometimes possible to obtain funding from other sources to maintain Grade 1 buildings, Heritage Lottery funding represents virtually the only source of public finance for those listed as Grade 2.

¹ The Grade 1 churches are Saltaire (Yorkshire), Monks Chapel (South Western) and Maesyronnen (Wales)

² The Category A churches are St Nicholas (Scotland – Church of Scotland/URC) Oakshaw (Scotland – URC/Church of Scotland)

4. Local churches

4.1 For some listed local churches this is a live and pressing issue. It is clear that some are not only listed – but also *listing!* Here are comments from three:

The church is a Georgian meeting house. The windows need renewing but because the building is listed, an architect has had to be employed to ensure that the replacements are appropriate. This has made the job much more expensive.

Our listing severely limits any change to the fabric or usage. We are presently holding our breath that the winter weather will not blow in a huge stained glass window, which is held in place by rust and lead that is 145 years old. The last rough estimate we had for this repair was five years ago and was in the region of £150,000 plus the cost of scaffolding. For a congregation of under sixty, a repair bill of that nature is beyond contemplation.

Our (Grade 1) Church is of Italianate design. This virtually rules out any change to the fabric of the building. Even panes of glass must be replaced like for like. But we cannot get the glass, so it would have to be specially made. We need £2 million over the next four or five years.

5. The debate

5.1 There is a range of views about the Lottery, and applications for Lottery funding:

5.2 The Listed Buildings Advisory Group, whilst understanding the spirit of the 1995 resolution, expresses concern that, if the United Reformed Church does not accept Lottery funding, it increasingly puts pressure on other sources of funding within the Church to maintain listed buildings. The Group believes that a change to the Church's stance would allow a more straightforward relationship with English Heritage, which might secure a larger slice of available funding for United Reformed churches and allow more use of English Heritage's considerable expertise. There is also a more general concern expressed, that the Church will simply not be able to fulfil its obligation to care for listed buildings, and that local elders may find themselves in an increasingly uncomfortable position. Accepting Lottery funding for this purpose, it is argued, will allow the church to spend more of its own money on Mission.

5.3 Some say that Lottery funding is often used for dubious purposes, so it would be much better that some of it should be used for furthering the work of God's kingdom. Some are able to make a distinction between gambling as such (and benefiting from it by spending the winnings) and drawing on national funds derived from money raised as a tax levied on gambling.

5.4 Others say the world has moved on since 1995; Lottery funding is now effectively government funding, and we inflict unnecessary self-harm on ourselves by exercising our conscience over the issue. Other denominations have by and large come to that conclusion. If we were to inquire, it is argued, we would often discover that funding from other sources, such as local authorities, for youth or community work, came originally, from the Lottery.

5.5 In making a case for involvement with the Lottery or other forms of gambling, some would contend that they can see no difference between this and financial investment. Neither gamblers nor investors are immune from the sin of greed and covetousness. Others do make a distinction: the investment gains of one do not depend on the losses of another; Lottery wins are at the expense of someone else's losses.

5.6 Some would also contend that gambling is not *malum in se* (not bad in itself) – that it is a legitimate consumer pursuit. This means that freedom of will requires a right to freely choose to participate; to say otherwise would be to interfere with consumer sovereignty, and could smack of paternalism. Others counter that freedom carries with it a responsibility that attends to the common good and the well being of all.

5.7 Some contend that to sanction applications for Lottery funding, whilst at the same time discouraging church members from buying Lottery tickets is hypocritical. However, it might be said to be equally hypocritical to visit a theatre, museum or art gallery, or attend the 2012 Olympic Games (all of which are benefiting from Lottery funding) whilst resisting an approach for similar funding to maintain a historic church building. This, perhaps, illustrates the extent to which the Lottery has become part of national life.

5.8 For some, put simply, the Lottery is gambling and gambling remains a social evil. The United Reformed Church, in common with other Free Churches, has for long recognised that gambling can be harmful, and can blight the lives both of gamblers and their family members. Although research suggests that the Lottery is played fairly equally across social classes, some spend money they cannot afford to spend, partly for fun, but also, sometimes, in pursuit of the big win that will solve their financial problems. Instead, they may be driven further into poverty and despair.

5.9 Whilst many see a small sum spent on the Lottery as harmless enjoyment, and say that the Lottery may be less readily addictive, and therefore less dangerous than some other forms of gambling, it may nevertheless normalise gambling for those who play. For some it becomes an addiction, which disrupts or destroys family life, and leads to debt, crime, unemployment, homelessness and mental ill-health. A Gambling Prevalence Survey in 2000 estimated that there could be up to 350,000 problem gamblers in Britain. A further Gambling Prevalence Study is to be published in 2007 (see www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk). Last year Britain spent about £53billion on gambling, 20 per cent more than eight years previously (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/gambling/story/0,,1827082,00.html>). Recent research by the BBC Panorama programme, suggested that 5.8 million people, many of them teenagers – visited internet gambling sites in one six month period during 2006. In 2005 20% of those calling the GamCare helpline had gambling debts of more than £10,000 – some in excess of £100,000 (<http://www.gamcare.org.uk/publications.php>).

5.10 Another approach has it that – however urgent the need to repair our buildings, or however convincing the argument about the evils of gambling – any decision should be based upon what we are about as the body of Christ or as the household of God. The *oikonomia* (the economy) of God in Christ is an offering of abundant life in which all are able to participate. Full life, not chance or wealth, is the ultimate goal of the gospel by which we are called to live.

6. Theological reflections

6.1 One message that the Lottery suggests is that life, work and living is about chance. As a national ritual, with the symbol of crossed fingers ingrained in the imagination, the message of a superstitious dependence on the economy of the world, and chance, rather than God, is not difficult to deduce. How do we respond to this? From a biblical/theological perspective can we discern possible guidelines, as there is no Christian blueprint to guide?

6.2 Our baptism in Christ demands that we lead godly lives, bearing witness to our common faith in the “God in Christ” economy (Phil.1:27). It can be contended that the Lottery may lead us away from godly lives as it promotes the sins of greed and covetousness – the obsessive desire for material gain, motivated by images of great wealth. The tendency towards *pleonexia* (annexing what does not belong to us) runs

counter to God's liturgy of abundance for all. This can lead to a misdirection of these gifts for selfish means and ultimately idolatry, and a failing to live out our responsibilities as good stewards of what God has given us.

6.3 Involvement in a game of chance may also be inconsistent with trust in God's providence. The Lottery trivializes and attempts to manipulate God's providence and care of creation. A Reformed perspective, with its strong sense of God's guidance of the world, ought to be particularly critical of activities that make God an accomplice in any economy of chance. In a situation of despair and hopelessness, the Lottery may invite people to place their trust in a false god, fortune, rather than the counter claim of "Give us this day our daily bread".

6.4 If as a Church we hold to God's preferential option for the poor, then the fact that some choose, or are drawn, to spend money they cannot afford becomes a matter of concern. If the National Lottery is conducted as a means to raise public funds for the common good, then should not the costs be progressive, so that those who are better able, bear a greater portion of the public burden. Should the cost of maintaining heritage sites fall disproportionately on the poor? Is this another form of "grinding the poor" against which Scripture offers harsh words?

6.5 Whilst these may be pointers to us being wary of participation in the Lottery, the question at issue is not whether the Church should relax its advice to members not to buy Lottery tickets, but whether Lottery funding should be sought for one specific purpose. While greed and covetousness can be what motivates much of the ethos of the Lottery, the same may be said of much in all of our lives. There are so many other things that we do that are motivated by obsessive material gain. Why, then, should the Lottery be singled out?

6.6 Our Christian understanding of the economic common good sharpens the dilemma of faith and faithfulness that these issues place before us. What is more, it underscores our human state: the contradictions and the ambiguities that humans have to live with and in spite of which, God in Christ will not abandon humankind. Grace still abounds.

7. Views of other churches

7.1 Methodist churches are able to consider applying for Lottery funding. In 1999, Methodist Conference agreed that any decision was for local managing trustees. The Church has around 620 listed churches in England, Scotland, Wales and the Channel Islands. Three or four applications have been made each year since 2000; the majority have been successful, realising, on average, something in the region of £100,000. Some local trustees have declined to apply. (While this paper was being drafted, there was debate within the Methodist Church about whether the trustees of the Old Rectory, Epworth – Wesley's birthplace – should accept Lottery money to fund restoration). The Methodist Church's general approach to the Lottery, as with other forms of gambling, is to press for safeguards to protect people from harm (for more details see www.methodist.org.uk/static/factsheets/fs_lottery.htm).

7.2 The Salvation Army says it does not knowingly apply for Lottery funding for any purpose. However, it acknowledges that it is possible that it has received money that has its origins in the Lottery, because it does not question donors about where their money came from.

7.3. The Church of England sees no basis on which Lottery money should be used to finance worship, evangelism and pastoral care. However, the repair and maintenance of historic churches and cathedrals is seen as being a responsibility which the Church undertakes, in part, on behalf of the nation as a whole. The Church's bishops therefore decided that it would be acceptable for individual Church of England bodies to decide

whether to apply for Lottery funds for projects connected with these purposes – and many have done so. The Church of England has 4,200 parish churches that are Grade 1 listed, representing 45% of all Grade 1 buildings in England.

7.4 Despite a distaste for the Lottery, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland voted in 1998 to permit congregations to make application for Lottery funds as they saw fit, recognising that public funding was increasingly financed by Lottery revenue.

8. Commentary

8.1 It is, perhaps fitting, that the Church should be considering the issue of Lottery funding, as it commemorates the 200th anniversary of the ending of Britain's involvement in the Transatlantic slave trade. When the Act of abolition was passed in 1806, William Wilberforce apparently turned to another abolitionist and said exultantly: *What shall be abolish next?* The other is said to have replied: *The Lottery, I think.* The task for our Church currently, is much less ambitious than that!

8.2 It has been suggested that a more appropriate way forward would be to protest to English Heritage that non-Lottery funding is not available to Churches that object to seeking Lottery money, and/or to urge government to make other funds available from state sources. The Listed Buildings Advisory Group is clear that this would not change the government's decision and could damage increasingly warm relations which the United Reformed Church enjoys with English Heritage, which is said to be increasingly sympathetic to the position of Churches. An approach to government would not be easy to mount, as colleague churches are accepting Lottery funding. Another suggestion is to encourage application to other independent sources of funding. Again, the advice of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group is that this is becoming increasingly difficult – except, perhaps, in the case of Grade 1 listed buildings; for other listed buildings, independent trusts refer applicants to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

8.3 The Church and Society committee re-affirms its concern about the impact of the Lottery and will continue to work with other denominations to express this. The committee recognises that it is readily accessible to those for whom gambling is, or may become, addictive, and that it may normalise gambling for people, some of whom may be driven further into poverty as a consequence. However, taking into account all the circumstances, the committee believes it is now right to recommend to General Assembly that it should allow the elders and church meeting of churches which are *listed* buildings, to make application for Heritage Lottery funding, for the upkeep of the building, if they wish to do so. This should not be taken as a more general endorsement of the Lottery. The committee does not recommend that this relief be extended to other "historic" church buildings which are not listed, as the same arguments do not necessarily apply.

RESOLUTION 41

Heritage Lottery Funding

Having re-considered its position on Lottery funding, General Assembly accepts, reluctantly, that some local churches will need to make application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to assist with the upkeep and repair of their *listed* church buildings and, in that respect, revises the advice contained in Resolution 20 of General Assembly 1995, which urged members and councils of the Church to disassociate themselves from the Lottery.

Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality

Document 2

Document 2

Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality

General Assembly 2007

Document 2

1. Introduction and Summary

1.1 In 1999, a major report entitled "Human Sexuality Report 1999" was presented to General Assembly. It was the fruit of two years' work undertaken in five groups. It remains a full and useful document and is the most recent of a series of reports produced on the subject within our church. A few printed copies are still available from Church House, or it can be found on the Church's website (www.urc.org.uk).

1.2 One of its recommendations, which became General Assembly resolution 34 (1999) sought to test the mind of the church on a form of words which read as follows:

"In the context of the affirmations commended to the church in Resolution 31, the United Reformed Church affirms and welcomes people of homosexual orientation within the life of the church and society, but does not believe that there is a sufficiently clear mind within the church at this time to affirm the acceptability of homosexual practice."

1.3 Following discussion in the wider church over the next year, a number of resolutions were brought to the Assembly in 2000, among them:

Resolution 14. General Assembly, recognising that the statement contained within Resolution 34 of 1999 has received a measure of support in the councils of the church, but not sufficient to allow it to proceed:

- accepts that there is a lack of agreement relating to issues of human sexuality, and that any further resolution attempting to declare the mind of the church on this subject would be unlikely to find sufficient support at this time;
- affirms that the process the church uses to assess candidates and to call ministers is the means by which the church seeks to discern the call of God; and
- acknowledges that discussion on these matters will continue within as well as beyond the church and encourages the United Reformed Church to base its consideration on the Human Sexuality Report 1999, wherever possible within an ecumenical context.

Resolution 15. General Assembly asks that for a period of seven years, during which reflection, prayer and sharing continue, no resolutions attempting to define the policy of the church on homosexuality should be proposed in any of the councils of the church."

1.4 This established the **moratorium** which comes to an end at Assembly 2007. In preparation for this Assembly, Mission Council has given thought to the next steps that might be taken.

1.5 After looking at possible options, Mission Council recommends to General Assembly that it –

- remind the church of the very considerable work which led up to the Human Sexuality Report 1999, acknowledging that discussions have not in fact been continued or developed in the intervening time;
- call the church to a recognition of the continuing diversity and disagreement that exists over these issues and also to a recommitment to stay together and work together;
- emphasise the value and place of the current Catch the Vision and Evangelism Consultation process, and set the next phase of discussions within that context;
- outline a process for the consideration of issues that need further exploration;
- encourage continuing restraint over attempts to define policy.

2. The current context

2.1 Since the 1999 report to General Assembly on Human Sexuality, there have been some developments in the perception of same-sex relationships within society as a whole, and there have been changes in the law, notably in relation to civil partnerships.

2.2 Within the church, as the moratorium has been honoured, it is difficult to assess what changes in opinions and attitudes there may have been. Also, during this period, the church has not taken the opportunity that was envisaged and encouraged in the Assembly resolutions in 1999 and 2000 to continue open and constructive discussion of matters of human sexuality.

2.3 Assembly affirmed in 2000 that the normal assessment procedure was the way decisions about candidates for ministry were to be taken.

2.4 General Assembly has, however, not made any formal decisions against or in favour of the ordination of people in committed same-sex relationships. It is reaching a common mind on this that has so far proved impossible. While some have felt that it was always legitimate for such people to be ordained if they fulfilled other criteria acceptably, others have seen such a step as a new and unacceptable departure from the traditions of the church.

2.5 For some, this absence of a declared policy has meant freedom to make decisions locally and in the councils and committees of the church according to best Christian judgment. This is the procedure permitted under Resolution 14(b) of 2000 (see 1.3 above). For others, the absence of a policy has seemed to become a policy in itself, in that it has allowed actions which were not acceptable to sections of the church.

2.6 While therefore there has not been any real progress in terms of understanding or agreement within the church, we are in a new situation in several respects –

- civil partnerships have been introduced and also new anti-discrimination legislation relating to employment and the provision of goods and services;
- tensions within the Anglican World Communion have raised the profile of this issue within the life of the church and society;
- the media have heightened the general awareness of issues of same-sex relationships within society;
- we are now in the midst of re-evaluating our life as a church through the Catch the Vision process;
- there is reluctance in many parts of the church to re-engage in a discussion which was so distracting, distressing and divisive.

2.7 It is the last two points which are particularly relevant at this moment. As the moratorium comes to an end, we cannot simply revert to where we were seven years ago. As part of the Catch the Vision process, a series of "Evangelism (or Hothorpe) Consultations" has been set up. These involve people from across the theological traditions of the church and have already been the means of establishing good relationships and a desire to explore a number of issues together in some depth. This part of the Catch the Vision process is reported elsewhere. It is sufficient to note here that this is an ongoing process which is expected to make major contributions to the life and ethos of the United Reformed Church during this year, and that the reopening of the sexuality discussion at this stage could overshadow that work in an unhelpful way, particularly as the consultations so far have been leading towards a greater sense of unity and cooperation. It would be constructive to build upon the fruits of this work over the coming months and as it reaches completion.

3. Some convictions

3.1 Beyond the deep convictions that unite us as Christ's people, it seems important to review the range of particular convictions that do or should unite us at this point. Among these are the following:

1. In order to maintain its *integrity*, the church must look honestly at itself and face up to the extent of its internal diversity.
2. The church's life is built on our *relationships* in Christ and with one another. It is vital to meet one another within the life of fellowship and common discipleship. It is also vital to be committed to exploration and dialogue together. Bringing people of differing understandings together for discussion has more often than not proved to be fruitful. Engaging in the process is as important as its conclusions.
3. The *unity* of the church is a gospel priority and a divine gift, to be responded to in human terms through the struggle of living together.
4. The *Catch the Vision* process is of great significance for the life of the church. It would be most helpful if the next steps in the human sexuality discussion, rather than interfering with this process, could be taken in the light of it.
5. More work is needed on a wide *range of issues* which have not been adequately addressed so far or which need to be looked at afresh in the changing circumstances. There are complexities in what might appear at first sight to be simple issues – such as the fact that civil partnerships do not necessarily imply sexual activity. Some of these are fundamental to discerning the way forward.
6. This work is important and the church should *commit* itself to this continuing process with all that that means concerning resources and time.

3.2 At the same time the depth of the tensions and pain amongst us must not be underestimated. For those who take a strong view towards either end of the spectrum of understanding there is sometimes sheer incomprehension that anyone could possibly believe what they understand their opposite colleagues to believe. Both "sides" can regard the other as unchristian and grossly mistaken in their attitudes and actions; neither can see how the other's position can be justified or acceptable in the life of the church. They may be horrified or mystified by some of the points made in the summaries that appear below (see section 7). There are others who occupy a more "middle" ground who cannot understand what all the fuss is about, and others again who have struggled deeply to hear and understand the different voices and resolve things in their own minds, but have been unable to reach any conclusions. But none of us has the right to condemn others without striving to listen to and understand them. All of us have prejudices, make assumptions and believe stereotypes. All of us need to bring these humbly before God for reassessment.

3.3 This is, of course, not the first time we have been at such a painful point. There are some similarities with decisions about the ordination of women in ministry, and even more so over pacifism. In last century's passionate debates over pacifism there was a strong and uncomprehending tension between people who sometimes thought that those who believed differently from themselves were denying the gospel. It may be that just as strongly in this case, many people feel passionately because the expression of sexuality has to do with the integrity of the gospel they believe and live by. It touches deep emotional chords because it concerns people's own self understanding. It touches core issues of the interpretation of Scripture and its relation to contemporary life. This sense of deep significance is experienced by people at both ends of the spectrum.

3.4 Clearly, our own church is not alone in this struggle. Any church that is not almost totally monolithic, and this includes practically all the mainline churches in this country, feels the force of this tension, sometimes almost to breaking point. This does seem a good reason for trying to explore some of the issues ecumenically, though at the end of the day we have to work this out in our own way. Some Anglican and Methodist documents, as well as some international approaches, have been considered briefly over recent months, and could be helpful. We may need to return to these as we chart a way forward.

4. Unity and diversity

4.1 We need perhaps at this point to weigh what unity means to us. We are bound together as Christians not just by being part of one church, but by our common receiving and sharing in the grace of God through Jesus Christ. We share one Lord, one faith, one baptism. We have therefore to look at our disagreements in the light of this deep covenant bond as well as our Lord's passionate prayer that we might be one. At the same time we clearly do not and cannot believe exactly the same things within our faith. Over the years we have had to find ways of living with our differences. This particular issue seems to present us with the challenge – if we cannot agree over human sexuality, and if we cannot persuade others of the rightness of our understanding, how shall we then live together and is it right that we should go on trying? It seems to us that the first, practical, part of that question has not been fully addressed. There are some difficult detailed questions here which need to be explored (see section 9 below). Regarding the imperative of unity, it has been powerfully put to us – how can we pray for unity and understanding in the world, and for peace between Israel and Palestine for instance, when we do not ourselves demonstrate a unity which copes with diversity?

4.2 It is a painful but joyful reality that those with whom we may profoundly disagree within the life of the church are also servants of Christ and recipients of God's grace. We need to recognise therefore that they may have insights which we have not yet received and that we may have valid insights to share with them. It should not be in our Christian vocabulary to say – 'I do not like what you are saying or what you believe and therefore I must walk away.' It is also in the nature of our church that we are not only a united church but a diverse church. We are here exploring the extent of that Christian diversity. We give considerable time and energy to exploring our ecumenical relationships with other churches. We need now to conduct our own internal "ecumenical" discussions.

4.3 In summary, we need to keep a sense of proportion about this issue, which can never be as important as the gospel itself nor all those things in which we are firmly united. We must also consider the impression we make on the world around us. We believe we have come to a point where we need to say to one another –

- this is who and where we are;
- can we now recognise and face our differences?
- and how might we live with that?

5. Options

5.1 In considering the question – what happens when the moratorium expires at General Assembly 2007? Mission Council has recognised that there are several options. Those to which detailed consideration has been given include –

- *Extending the moratorium for a further period.*
- *Allowing the moratorium to end and doing nothing further.*
- *Making a fresh attempt to define the church's policy.*
- *Making a "commitment" to stay together and work together.*
- *Making a "commitment" and agreeing to continue exploring a number of key issues.*

5.2 Each of these options has its attractions as well as problems. There is a widespread feeling that the moratorium has brought a welcome relief from open controversy. On the other hand there is need to make a number of decisions, some of which cannot be put off indefinitely. The first two options were not felt to be satisfactory because they would not move us forward. The third option would simply not be viable, given the recent experience of inconclusive discussions, and the sheer impossibility so far of being able to reach a common mind on a declared policy.

Moratorium on policy decisions on Homosexuality

5.3 Also, at this point in our history, we want to give full value to the Catch the Vision process. A fresh debate on issues of sexuality could all too easily become a major distraction from that creative piece of work. We note that work has recently been commissioned on key areas of our life such as our use of the Bible, prayer and evangelism. It would be good to give more time for that work to bear fruit and to developing patterns of common thinking and action without being diverted by less essential issues.

5.4 Bearing all these factors in mind, therefore, Mission Council proposes to develop the last of the options above by –

- (a) **inviting Assembly to endorse the Commitment set out below (sections 6 and 7), and**
- (b) **outlining a process by which further discussions can take place in the light of work already done (the 1999 report) and the Catch the Vision process (sections 8 and 9).**

5.5 The first of these would provide an occasion for the open recognition of diversity and the need for an atmosphere of respect; it would emphasise the significance of unity with diversity, and encourage a continuing journey together. It would represent a healthy and necessary living with tension and difference and provide the context for the next stage of discussions.

5.6 The second would allow for the outworking of the Catch the Vision process and also provide appropriate means for further discussions.

5.7 It needs to be recognised that the endorsement of a Commitment of this nature will not be easy for everyone. In particular it does not define an end point at which decisions will need to be reached. However, it is offered as a means of holding us together meanwhile, so that we can face these difficult issues with mutual respect and perhaps come to some measure of understanding. It does not presume any particular outcome. On a journey of this nature none of us knows exactly what the destination may be or what new discoveries we may make along the way. None of us should expect to take the church in our own direction, only that we seek together to find our Lord's direction for his church.

5.8 Perhaps the challenge in front of us can be put in the following terms. All of us read the same story in the Bible, we belong to the same heritage of faith. How is it then that some can come to mutually exclusive understandings of what is most honouring to God in relation to one key aspect of human living? We need to listen to one another to discover how that has happened and to understand the nature of that difference before deciding what to do or how to live with it. We may find more agreement than we had expected. We may find some of those differences are insoluble. We may find ways of living with that tension.

6. The Commitment

6.1 This Commitment aims to create a framework for conducting our church life and future discussions together. It is suggested that General Assembly should make such a commitment and encourage synods and local churches to recognise it as the basis for their consideration of these issues.

6.2 In this way we hope to:

- (a) ensure that all within the United Reformed Church can feel that their voice and views have been heard and are recognised as having their own integrity,
- (b) agree to continue in fellowship together despite divisions of understanding and practice on this issue,
- (c) commit ourselves to travel this path of further exploration together.

6.3 In recognising that the broad range of positions outlined in the Commitment is generally representative of different views held within the church at the present time, it needs to be emphasised that none of these should be regarded as a settled or "watertight" position that cannot be reviewed or revised as understanding develops, and that none of them as such is the official position or policy of the church.

7. Commitment on Human Sexuality

As the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church,

7.1 we recognise that –

- many of the issues and views surrounding human sexuality can seem to be intractable and irreconcilable;
- despite lengthy debates, much study and many reports, opinions have not changed sufficiently for us to be of one mind;
- this is a deeply emotive and potentially divisive issue;
- human sexuality and the language we use about it raises many complex questions, not least in the area of biblical interpretation.

7.2 while it is not possible to do full justice to the variety of views represented within the church, we recognise that the range includes –

7.2.1 some people who feel that the debate on human sexuality has become a wrong focus and has received too much attention, believing that:

- faithful living and worship should take priority over controversy about human sexuality;
- participation in God's mission and Christ's ministry in the world demands all the energy of God's people;
- this is not a matter over which policy decisions imposing a universal rule are necessary or appropriate;
- the church's existing assessment procedures are appropriate for discerning the call of God;
- responses to pastoral situations involving people in same-sex relationships are best determined within the local church;
- working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views can create painful tensions, though it may also offer opportunity for growth and development.

7.2.2 some other people who feel that this debate is a necessary focus because it concerns the Word of God, and for them is a passionately held matter of holiness, purity and obedience to God's commands in scripture, believing that:

- God's creation plan is for the complementarity of man and woman, and that sexual relations apart from that are therefore disordered;
- scripture and the traditions of the church teach that the only legitimate pattern for sexual relations is between a man and woman within the commitment of marriage;
- all scriptural references to same-sex activity are explicit in their condemnation;
- same-sex activity is an affront to Christian morality and offensive to many people of other faiths and of none;
- people in sexually active same-sex relationships should not be accepted for ministry;
- the acceptance of same-sex (civil) partnerships on the part of society and the state is a matter to be resisted;
- the character and teaching of Jesus requires that both grace and truth must be embodied in dealing with this issue and with the people concerned;
- working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views and practice creates painful tensions.

Moratorium on policy decisions on Homosexuality

7.2.3 some others again who feel that this debate is a necessary focus because it is a passionately held matter of God's unbounded grace, justice, the work of the Spirit and faithfulness to God's revelation in Christ and in scripture, believing that:

- God's will is for newness of life for all people in Christ, regardless of any human distinctions, including sexual orientation;
- it is God's creative intent that there are people whose innate sexual orientation and its fulfilment are directed towards others of the same sex;
- some people are called by God into committed, loving, same-sex relationships, including their sexual consummation, and that such relationships can be judged by the fruits of the Spirit that result;
- whilst most scriptural references to same-sex activity seem negative, they are not relevant to the contemporary understanding of same-sex relationships; emphasis needs to be given to the scriptural themes of grace, love and faithfulness;
- where vocations to ministry of those in committed same-sex relationships are discerned through the processes of the church to be the work of the Holy Spirit, such vocations should be upheld;
- this is an issue of justice, and the church should celebrate changes made to address unjust structures in society as, in part, the work of the Spirit;
- the church should welcome the creation of civil partnerships and support such unions pastorally;
- working and sharing fellowship with people of very different views and practice creates painful tensions.

7.3 recognising this very wide range of views, we –

- acknowledge this diversity;
- accept that these views are all held with integrity and often with passion;
- acknowledge that those who are sisters and brothers in Christ are so through God's calling rather than personal choosing;
- believe that Christ calls us to strive to live together;
- realise that this can only be done by reliance on the grace of God to enable mutual respect, love and continuing exploration together;
- agree to continue to explore these differences in the light of our understanding of Scripture and under the Holy Spirit's guidance for our individual and shared life in today's world.

7.4 in love and submission to Christ who holds us together, we therefore commit ourselves to stay together, to work and pray together, to treat one another with respect, and to seek God's gifts of unity, harmony, wisdom and deeper understanding.

8. Ways of working

8.1 In the period after Assembly, if Assembly accepts these proposals, it might be good for synods and local churches to reflect on the Commitment, and to identify themselves with its spirit and intention.

8.2 Also in this period, time needs to be allowed for the relevant work of the Catch the Vision process to be completed and assimilated into the life of the Church.

8.3 It is a clear conviction that the process of further discussion needs to take place without the pressure of deadlines. While there may be need to come to some conclusions, and this process cannot be entirely open-ended, discussion might well be hindered rather than helped by the imposition of a timetable. It is imperative that the whole church is given space to be and to reflect.

8.4 In order for further work to be coordinated and be moved forward, it would be advisable for a small group, perhaps a task group of Mission Council, to have responsibility for overseeing the process and ensuring that discussions are held with the appropriate people and ecumenically.

8.5 One of the first things the group might be asked to do is to review the processes used in similar discussions by some other churches, such as the Church of Sweden and the French Reformed Church, and to consider these as models for our own use. We might also want to learn from the methods of those who have encouraged "conflict transformation".

8.6 The group might usefully gather and publish accessible materials covering the diverse range of subjects and views which would be of help to small groups and local churches.

8.7 The group would be responsible for considering how best to deal with the issues listed below, how discussions might take place and with whom – whether by special groups, ecumenically or by existing committees – and how local churches and the councils of the church might also be involved. The group would coordinate this work and report back to Mission Council.

9. Some issues to be explored further

Mission Council recognises that as well as the range of issues considered in the report of 1999, there are many related, often complex and significant issues which need to be explored in more depth and in a constructive atmosphere, and in terms of the processes set out above (section 8). In outline some of these are –

9.1 Theology

Among several theological issues to be addressed, a coherent and comprehensive theology of same-sex partnerships is urgently needed as a basis for any further decisions. (A number of the following points depend on establishing a clear theological framework.) Ideally, as with earlier work, this should be set within the context of human sexuality, marriage and relationships in general as well as our understanding of gender.

9.2 Advocacy

Related to this is the need for clarity about the church's teaching on matters of sexual relationships. What do we actually affirm and teach about marriage, singleness, celibacy and same-sex relationships, for instance? Within this, how does the church cope with two incompatible sets of teaching, one of which says that same-sex practice is wrong and the other of which says that it can be life affirming? Do we say that our church teaches both?

9.3 Standards in ministry

What are acceptable patterns of life within ordained ministry? What standards are expected of ministers and members in relation to different expressions of sexuality? How are we to understand a minister's promise to lead a holy life?

9.4 Discipline

Recognising that there are ordained ministers within the church in openly same-sex relationships, are they under similar disciplinary constraints as heterosexual and single ministers? If so, what do we understand those constraints to be?

Moratorium on policy decisions on Homosexuality

9.5 Legal implications

Some recent legislation carries implications for the church. These need to be reviewed both in terms of what is required of the church and the church's own response. It would be good to do this work ecumenically, and particularly in the light of recent work in the Methodist Church.

9.6 Blessing of partnerships

What attitude should the United Reformed Church take regarding the blessing of civil partnerships? Do the present guidelines need to be reviewed, and should they be subject to debate and decision in General Assembly?

9.7 Unity

Believing that the unity of the church is a gospel priority, how much internal diversity is tolerable before that unity is contradicted? Clearly there is much diversity within the present church over many issues, but would it ever be acceptable in the name of unity to have such a diversity of beliefs and practices that members and ministers denied the actions and beliefs of others and where some ministers were totally unacceptable in some parts of the church? (Methodist Conference in 2005 asked that its "Faith and Order Committee should reflect upon the theological implications of being a Church that has to live or contend with different and mutually contradictory convictions." We need to address the same question from our own perspective.)

9.8 Practical implications of diversity

We need to look carefully at the implications of the kind of diversity envisaged in the previous point. Might the acceptance of mutually exclusive interpretations living side by side lead all too painfully to the "clustering" of churches and ministers of similar views? What does it mean for a minister to be called locally but recognised nationally, particularly if different criteria seem to be used in different parts of the church? Might some candidates for ministry and some existing ministers seeking pastorates need to look for areas of the country where they might be more readily accepted than in others? If such pressures arise, how do we maintain the integrity of the church?

9.9 Conscience

What are the implications of personal conscience in this area? For example, what freedom do individuals and congregations have to reject the ministries of those whose attitudes or lifestyles are not acceptable to them?

9.10 Stereotyping

How do we overcome the dangers of stereotyping, which need to be challenged wherever they come from?

9.11 Pastoral issues

How should the church respond to those whose orientation is other than heterosexual and those in same-sex relationships and civil partnerships? How should the church respond to those who find such relationships and partnerships unacceptable and offensive in a Christian context? There is also potential for a wide range of issues of principle to arise from pastoral situations. Such things as a person's reorientation of gender could affect a minister. Situations like this need to be looked at now so that when they do arise they can be addressed with understanding and care.

RESOLUTION 42

Moratorium on policy decisions on homosexuality

General Assembly welcomes and accepts Mission Council's guidance concerning the ending of the moratorium on policy decisions on matters of human sexuality.

RESOLUTION 43

General Assembly agrees to the wording of the Commitment on Human Sexuality.

RESOLUTION 44

General Assembly adopts the Commitment on Human Sexuality on behalf of the church.

RESOLUTION 45

General Assembly calls for further detailed discussions on aspects of human sexuality to be initiated in the light of the Catch the Vision process, with guidance from Mission Council and in the spirit of the Commitment.

RESOLUTION 46

Acknowledging the value of earlier work on human sexuality, and recognising that there has been some confusion about the implications of the moratorium, General Assembly regrets that the extent of "reflection, prayer and sharing" has been limited over the past seven years and encourages the continuing use of that earlier material.

RESOLUTION 47

General Assembly asks Mission Council to set up a task group to oversee the process of addressing issues of human sexuality, particularly those set out in the report, and to enable the process of widening discussions to involve the whole church.

RESOLUTION 48

General Assembly urges members of councils and local churches not to press for policy decisions on these matters during this process, but to join in discussions that might help to increase understanding and unity.

Document 3

Global warming/climate change is widely recognised by scientists and governments as the greatest challenge facing the earth. Climate change is an environmental issue, with consequences including devastating heat waves, drought, the spread of disease, habitat loss, species extinction and increased storms and rising sea levels causing both inland flooding and coastal inundation. Climate change is also a justice issue, whilst the west/north have made the biggest contribution to the causes of global warming the south is least able to mitigate the situation and most likely to pay the highest price. Scientists warn of an impending 'tipping point', a point of no return after which the level of carbon in the atmosphere will cause an irreversible and accelerating change. It is imperative that all of civil society, including the Church acts.

What has the United Reformed Church in association with sister churches done to date?

1. Produced a study and action guide entitled *Roots and Branches* (Assembly 1998) for local churches.
2. Adopted the Five Marks of Mission (Assembly 1999) as our core mission driver which includes as the fifth (but of equal ranking): to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.
3. Passed a Denominational Environmental Policy (Assembly 2004).
4. Promoted the ecumenical Eco-Congregation project www.ecocongregation.org designed to help churches consider environmental issues within their church life and take positive action, with excellence being marked with the Eco-Congregation Award.
5. As members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, aided the development of the Accra Confession (2004), which was subsequently taken up by the Council for World Mission (2006) in the 'Living out the Accra Confession' statement (appendix 1). It invites people, congregations and churches to covenant for justice to transform ourselves and the world according to God's purposes and promises, inspired by the vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

6. Promoted *Operation Noah* www.operationnoah.org – the churches' campaign on climate change (Assembly 2004).
7. In 2005 established with the Methodist Church 'Creation Challenge' an environmental network enabling those who are active on environmental matters to pool ideas and expertise and to make care of God's creation a central part of local church life and witness. The network is working with synod property officers to produce an audit regarding environmental friendliness, which could be added to quinquennial surveys of church buildings.
8. Is developing a partnership with the church and government of Kiribati, in the Pacific, to spread understanding of climate change issues and to take action on environmental damage in the Pacific.
9. Is launching at Assembly 2007 "*At the Water's Edge*": a Commitment for Life publication with Bible study and worship ideas reflecting the link between climate change and poverty including stories from some of its four partner countries, Bangladesh, Jamaica, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Zimbabwe.

Climate change requires concerted decisive action by all civil society, governments, business, the voluntary sector including churches and all people. Current government targets are to achieve a 60% cut in carbon emissions from the 1990 level by 2050. However, it is increasingly recognised that even this level of cuts is too little too late, with the poor bearing the highest cost. The church has an honourable record of campaigning and acting, most recently in debt and trade issues. It is important for the church to take a prophetic lead to act for the well being of the world including the poorest and as Christian witness. Recognising our common purpose, International Relations, Church and Society with Commitment for Life seek to work together with the whole church to reclaim a spirituality of caring for the whole of creation and encourage the whole church to act for the common good.

RESOLUTION 49

Climate Change

General Assembly

- i) notes with approval the work already underway on climate change, and reaffirms the need to build this into the whole life of the Local Church;
- ii) recognises that all society, including the United Reformed Church, must shrink its carbon footprint;
- iii) calls upon the Church and Society Committee
 - a) to determine how carbon emissions can best be monitored across the church;
 - b) to develop plans in consultation with the relevant agents of the church to implement year on year cuts in carbon emissions using the expertise of such groups as Eco-Congregations, Operation Noah, Creation Challenge and the Joint Public Issues Team;
 - c) to roll this out across the church, and
 - d) to report annually to the Trustees;
- iv) calls upon Local Churches to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Section O Papers

General Assembly 2007

Document 4

Section O:
Replacement of existing Part II

3

Document 5

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure
Part II

31

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

General Assembly 2007

Document 4

Text related to Resolution 11

Section O Advisory Group

PART II – Rules of Procedure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

A. GENERAL

A.1 These are the Rules of Procedure referred to in Paragraph 5 of Part I.

A.2 In the interests both of the Minister and of the whole church, the Section O Process once begun should be conducted and concluded as expeditiously as possible, consistent with the proper conduct of the procedures. To this end, these Rules impose time limits for the various steps which have to be taken. However it is equally in the interests of all that the Section O Process once begun should not be aborted, delayed or hindered by an unduly narrow or restrictive application of the time limits or indeed of any other aspects of these Rules.

A.3 Accordingly if any of the time limits specified in these Rules of Procedure are not complied with, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may in its discretion allow a reasonable further period for such compliance, except as regards the strict time limit imposed upon the right of appeal (Paragraph G.1). In other cases, if the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission considers that sufficient time has been allowed and the action required has still not been carried out or that there has been an unreasonable delay in the carrying out of the action (whether or not these Rules imposed a time limit in such case), it may proceed and attach whatever weight it believes appropriate in the circumstances to such failure to comply, or to any delay in compliance.

A.4 The sole object of the Section O Process is to enable a decision to be reached in accordance with Section F, or Section G in the event of an appeal. All statements, whether written or oral, made during and in the context of this process shall be regarded as being made in pursuance of that object and for no other reason. All such statements shall be treated as confidential within the framework of the Section O Process.

A.5 For the purpose of Parts I and II of this Section O, a reference to any of the Sections A to J shall mean a reference to that Section of this Part II and the following words and expressions carry the following meanings:-

A.5.1 **“Appeals Commission”** shall mean the Commission constituted for the hearing of each Appeal in accordance with Section G.

A.5.2 **“Appointers”** shall mean the persons responsible under Section C for the appointment of the Assembly Commission.

A.5.3 **“Assembly Commission”** shall mean a Commission consisting of five (5) persons selected from the Commission Panel for the purpose of hearing and deciding each case dealt with under the Section O Process.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

A.5.4 **“Basis of Union”** shall mean the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church.

A.5.5 **“Commission Panel”** shall mean a Panel consisting of a maximum of fifty (50) members of the United Reformed Church from whom shall be chosen the persons to form the Assembly Commission to hear each case being dealt with under the Section O Process.

A.5.6 **“Commission Stage”** shall mean that part of the Section O Process initiated in accordance with Paragraph B.8.1 and continuing until the conclusion of the case.

A.5.7 **“Council”** shall mean the council of the Church whose Mandated Group issues the Referral Notice.

A.5.8 **“Deletion”** and **“to delete”** shall mean the removal of/to remove the name of a Minister from the Roll of Ministers other than at the request of the Minister concerned or by the acceptance of his/her resignation or by his/her death.

A.5.9 **“District Council”** shall mean that District Council which in relation to any Minister exercises oversight of that Minister in accordance with its function under Paragraph 2 (3)(i) of the Structure and references to District Council shall be understood to include area councils in Scotland such area councils being in every respect identical with district councils and wherever the words **“District Council”** or **“district”** appear they shall as regards Scotland be read as meaning **“Area Council”** or **“area”**.

A.5.10 **“Hearing”** shall mean the Hearing conducted by the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission under Section E or Section G.

A.5.11 **“Initial Enquiry”** shall mean the enquiry conducted by the Mandated Group, in conjunction with the person calling in the Mandated Group in accordance with the provisions of Section B, during the period beginning when it is so called in and ending when it serves either a Notice of Non-Continuance or a Referral Notice in accordance with these Rules of Procedure.

A.5.12 **“Investigation”** shall mean the process of investigation carried out by the Mandated Group as set out in Section D.

A.5.13 **“Joint Panel”** shall mean the Panel as defined in Paragraph B.3 from which one person shall be appointed to be a member of the Mandated Group.

A.5.14 **“Mandated Group”** shall mean the group mandated to act in the name of a District Council under Section B and in any case where the Referral Notice has been issued in the name of a council other than the District Council the expression **“Mandated Group”** shall where the context so permits be construed as a reference to the member or members (not exceeding three) of any corresponding group of such other council.

A.5.15 **“Minister”** shall mean a person whose name is on the Roll of Ministers who is under consideration within the Section O Process.

A.5.16 **“Notice of Appeal”** shall mean a Notice specified in Paragraph G.1 whereby either of the parties in any case indicates his/her/its intention to appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission.

A.5.17 **“Notice of Non-Continuance”** shall mean a Notice served under Paragraph B.7.2 at the conclusion of the Initial Enquiry by the Mandated Group on the person calling it in to indicate that the Mandated Group does not intend to proceed further with the disciplinary case against the Minister.

A.5.18 **“Notice of Reference back”** shall mean a Notice from the Appeals Commission of any reference back for a re-hearing by the Assembly Commission under Paragraph G.11.7.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

A.5.19 **“Outside organisation”** shall mean any body or organisation outside the Church by which the Minister is employed or with which the Minister holds any position or post or has any involvement, paid or unpaid, where such body or organisation would have a reasonable and proper expectation of being made aware of the particular step(s) being taken and/or the particular recommendation(s) or guidance being issued under the relevant paragraph of these Rules of Procedure in which the reference to the expression ‘Outside Organisation’ appears.

A.5.20 **“Parties”** shall mean (i) the Council, which for the purpose of the Section O Process shall act solely and exclusively through the Mandated Group, and (ii) the Minister.

A.5.21 **“Referral Notice”** shall mean a Notice specified in Paragraph B.8 whereby a case concerning Ministerial Discipline is referred into the Commission Stage and shall include any statement of reasons for such referral which may be appended to it.

A.5.22 **“Roll of Ministers”** shall have the meaning given to it in Paragraph 1 of Schedule E of the Basis of Union.

A.5.23 **“Rules of Procedure”** shall mean the Rules of Procedure governing the system of ministerial discipline commencing with the exercise by the District Council, Synod or General Assembly of its function as set out in Paragraph 2(3)(xviii), Paragraph 2(4)(xiv) or Paragraph 2(5)(xxiii) of the Structure as the case may be and continuing throughout the Section O Process such Rules being contained in this Part II of Section O.

A.5.24 **“Secretary of the Assembly Commission”** shall mean the person appointed by the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee to be responsible for all secretarial and procedural matters laid upon him/her by virtue of the Section O Process, and the period and terms of office of that person shall be such as the General Assembly shall decide.

A.5.25 **“Section O Process”** shall mean the whole Process set out in Parts I and II of this Section O (subject to such variations as shall from time to time be made).

A.5.26 **“Structure”** shall mean the Structure of the United Reformed Church.

A.5.27 **“Suspension”** and **“to suspend”** shall have the meanings assigned to them in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union.

A.5.28 **“Synod Panel”** shall mean the Panel referred to in Paragraph B.2.1 from which persons shall be appointed to be members of the Mandated Group.

A.6 A.6.1 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph A.6.4, appointment to the Commission Panel shall be by Resolution of the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee (or such other committee as may in the future perform the functions of the Nominations Committee), who shall in considering persons for appointment take into account (i) the need for balance and for a variety of skills and specialisations, particularly in the following areas – experience in ministerial oversight, theology and doctrine, law, counselling, psychology, mental health, experience in conduct of meetings and tribunals, and (ii) the advantages of including on the Commission Panel persons from a variety of ethnic minority backgrounds.

A.6.2 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph A.6.4, members of the Commission Panel shall be appointed for such term not exceeding five (5) years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit with power for the General Assembly to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms of five (5) years each, but any person who reaches the end of the term of his/her appointment on the Commission Panel whilst serving as a member of an Assembly Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

A.6.3 The General Assembly shall appoint from the Commission Panel one member to be the Convener of the Commission Panel and one member to be the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel, each (subject to the provisions of Paragraph A.6.2) to serve for such period as General Assembly shall decide.

A.6.4 When any member of the Commission Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Commission Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Assembly Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on an Assembly Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.

A.7 In any case where a person authorised or required to take some action regarding (i) the appointment of persons to any Mandated Group or (ii) the calling in of a Mandated Group or (iii) some other administrative or procedural matter under the Section O Process is unable for any reason to do so, then, unless the Section O Process already makes specific provision for such a situation, that person's duly appointed deputy shall take such action in his/her place. This Paragraph does not permit any member of an Assembly Commission, an Appeals Commission or a Mandated Group to appoint his/her own deputy.

A.8 In any case where the Secretary of the Assembly Commission (or the General Secretary in the case of Appeals, save where Paragraph G.10.5 applies) is unable for any reason to carry out the duties of that office, his/her place shall be taken by a deputy duly authorised by or in the name of General Assembly.

A.9 Where any issue or question of procedure arises whilst the matter is under the jurisdiction of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission that Commission shall resolve each such issue or question or give such directions as shall appear to it to be just and appropriate in the circumstances.

B. APPOINTMENT AND ROLE OF MANDATED GROUPS AND INITIATION OF SECTION O

B.1 B.1.1 To enable it properly to carry out its Function 2(3)(A)(xviii) of the Structure, every District Council shall act solely through a group of three persons ("the Mandated Group") which shall have mandated authority to act in the name of the District Council in every matter requiring consideration under that Function.

B.1.2 The Mandated Group called in to deal with any particular case under Paragraph B.6.1, Paragraph B.9.2 or Paragraph B.9.3 has no pastoral role to fulfil and its precise functions are described in Paragraphs B.7 and B.8.

B.2 In cases arising under Paragraph B.6.1 (District Council), the Mandated Groups charged with the responsibilities ascribed to them under these Rules of Procedure shall be constituted in the following manner:

B.2.1 Two members thereof shall be appointed by each District Council on a standing basis from a Synod Panel itself appointed and maintained by each Synod, there normally being on such panel at least one, and preferably two, persons from each District within the Synod. One such member shall, wherever possible, be appointed to the Mandated Group from the District from which the case emanates.

B.2.2 The Synod Moderator or other person responsible for calling in the Mandated Group shall appoint the remaining person to the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph B.3.

B.3 B.3.1 There shall be a standing panel ('the Joint Panel') consisting of a maximum of thirteen persons, of whom one shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably on account of some legal, tribunal or professional experience or

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

other similar background, which would equip them for assuming a role as part of a Mandated Group. The list of those currently on the Joint Panel shall be held by the Synod Moderators and the Deputy General Secretary.

B.3.2 In cases arising either under Paragraph B.6.1 (District Council) or Paragraph B.9.2 (Synod) (where one member of the Joint Panel will be required to serve) the Synod Moderator or other person responsible for calling in the Mandated Group shall appoint the remaining member of the Mandated Group for that case from the Joint Panel.

B.3.3 In cases arising under Paragraph B.9.3 (General Assembly or Mission Council on its behalf) the Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, shall constitute the Mandated Group by the appointment of all three persons, each of whom shall be selected from either the Joint Panel or any of the Synod Panels (at least one from the Joint Panel and at least one from the Synod Panels).

B.3.4 Any Mandated Group called in prior to the setting up of the Joint Panel shall consist of three persons from the appropriate Synod Panel.

B.4 If any member of a Synod Panel or the Joint Panel is a member of a local church connected with a case or has any pastoral or personal involvement in a case or is the subject of a disciplinary complaint, that person shall not form part of the Mandated Group for that case.

B.5 B.5.1 If any member of a Synod Panel or the Joint Panel is disqualified under Paragraph B.4 or is for any other reason unable to act in a particular case, the person calling in the Mandated Group shall appoint another member from the same panel to serve as a member of the Mandated Group for that case. The Mandated Group for all matters relating to that case shall be its remaining member(s) together with the person(s) appointed under this Paragraph. If only one such person is disqualified or otherwise unable to act, then, until any such further appointment is made, the mandate shall continue to be held by the remaining two members of the Mandated Group. If two members of the Mandated Group are disqualified or otherwise unable to act, there is no mandate for the remaining member to act alone.

B.5.2 No person shall serve as a member of or as the spokesperson for a Mandated Group in connection with any case where s/he would fall within any of the restrictions contained in Paragraph C.3.1.

B.6 B.6.1 B.6.1.1 If at any time the Moderator of the Synod or (if for any reason s/he should be unavailable or unable to act) the President of the District Council in consultation with such officers of the District Council as s/he considers appropriate believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister s/he shall forthwith in the name and on the authority of the District Council call in its Mandated Group, at the same time informing the Minister that this step has been taken. The Section O Process in the case of any Minister shall commence with the calling in of the Mandated Group.

B.6.1.2 In calling in the Mandated Group, the person so doing:

- (i) shall notify those two persons who, as members of the Synod Panel, will form part of the Mandated Group by virtue of Paragraph B.2.1 that they are called upon so to participate, advising them of the identity of the Minister but giving no further information at that point and
- (ii) shall notify one person from the Joint Panel of his/her intention to invite that person to serve as a member of the Mandated Group, advising him/her of the identity of the Minister but giving no further information at that point.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

B.6.1.3 In the event that any of the proposed appointees on to the Mandated Group is/are unable or unwilling to act, the process(es) of appointment from a Synod Panel and/or the Joint Panel shall continue until a Mandated Group consisting of three members has been duly constituted.

B.6.1.4 As soon as the above steps have all been taken, the person calling in the Mandated Group shall issue to each member thereof a written statement setting out the reasons for the calling in of the Mandated Group, the names of possible informants and any other sources of information at that time available. To avoid prejudice, that statement must not contain any assumptions or inferences or any personal reflections or opinions.

B.6.2.1 In cases of extreme emergency, the Moderator of the Synod or other person entitled to call in the Mandated Group under the Rules of Procedure may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing and only so long as s/he forthwith calls in the Mandated Group under Paragraph B.6.1, suspend the Minister with immediate effect either orally or in writing. Suspension imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister.

B.6.2.2 The person imposing the Suspension under Paragraph B.6.2.1 shall forthwith (i) give written notice of the Minister's Suspension to the Moderator of the Synod (if s/he is not the person calling in the Mandated Group), the Secretary of the District Council, the General Secretary and the Secretary for Ministries, and (ii) make a written disclosure of the Minister's Suspension to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation (as defined in Paragraph A.5.19). In order to preserve confidentiality any notice or disclosure given under this Paragraph shall not disclose any reason for the imposition of the Suspension (see also Paragraphs B.8.2 and B.11). However, any such notice or disclosure shall contain a statement explaining the effect of Suspension as outlined in Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and shall (if such be the case) state that the Police have been apprised of the matter giving rise to the Suspension.

B.6.3 Suspension imposed under Paragraph B.6.2.1 shall continue during the Mandated Group's initial enquiry period referred to in Paragraph B.7.1. If at the end of that period the Mandated Group serves a Referral Notice on the Minister, it must also serve on him/her a Notice confirming the continuance of the Suspension during the Commission Stage.

B.6.4 In the event that the initial enquiry period terminates without the issue of a Referral Notice, the Minister's Suspension under Paragraph B.6.2.1 shall automatically cease on the issue of a Notice of Non-Continuance under Paragraph B.7.2, whereupon the person imposing the Suspension under Paragraph B.6.2.1 shall give written notice of the cessation of the Suspension both to the Minister and to the persons specified in Paragraph B.6.2.2.

B.7 The functions of the Mandated Group called in by the person authorised for that purpose under Paragraph B.6 in any particular case are described in this Paragraph B.7 (as regards the initial enquiry) and in Paragraph B.8 (as regards its role during the Commission Stage):

B.7.1 The Mandated Group shall carry out its own initial enquiry with all due expedition in consultation (where practical and appropriate) with the person calling in the Mandated Group for the sole purpose of ascertaining whether the Commission Stage should be initiated. Having done so, it must bring its initial enquiry to a conclusion in accordance with Paragraphs B.7.2 and B.7.3.

B.7.2 If the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry not to proceed any further with the matter, it shall serve on the Moderator of the Synod or other person calling it in a notice to that effect (a Notice of Non-Continuance), which shall have the effect of discharging from further involvement in that case the Mandated Group itself (subject to due compliance by it of Paragraph H.4) and the Council in whose name it conducted the initial enquiry.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

B.7.3 On receipt of a Notice of Non-Continuance the person calling in the Mandated Group shall forthwith notify the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council that the Mandated Group is not proceeding any further and if the person calling in the Mandated Group has already suspended the Minister under Paragraph B.6.2.1, s/he must notify all the persons, bodies and organisations specified in Paragraph B.6.2.2 that disciplinary proceedings against the Minister and the Minister's Suspension are terminated with immediate effect.

B.7.4 If on the other hand the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry to initiate the Commission Stage, it shall follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.8.1 and B.8.3 whereupon the Commission Stage will be initiated.

B.8 B.8.1 Whenever the Mandated Group, having as a result of its Initial Enquiry become aware of any information relating to the Minister concerned which might require disciplinary investigation, concludes unanimously or by a majority that this is indeed so, it shall forthwith in the name of the District Council suspend the Minister (unless s/he has already been suspended under Paragraph B.6.2, in which case the Mandated Group shall serve on the Minister a notice that his/her Suspension shall continue during the Commission Stage) and initiate the Commission Stage in accordance with Paragraph B.10. Suspension under this Paragraph shall take effect when the Minister receives Notice thereof from the Mandated Group either orally or in writing. Suspension imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing (as to the contents of the written notice of Suspension, see also Paragraph B.11).

B.8.2 Suspension, whether imposed under Paragraph B.6.2.1 or B.8.1, does not imply any view about the correctness or otherwise of any allegations made concerning the Minister, nor does it affect the Minister's stipend nor the Minister's pension arrangements under the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Scheme.

B.8.3 The Mandated Group shall forthwith, by written notice to the person who called it in, advise him/her of the issue of the Referral Notice and the Notice of Suspension, and that person shall in turn forthwith (i) give written notice thereof to the Moderator of the Synod (if s/he is not the person calling in the Mandated Group), the Secretary of the District Council, the General Secretary and the Secretary for Ministries, and (ii) make a written disclosure of the Minister's Suspension to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation, unless notice thereof has already been given to that Outside Organisation under Paragraph B.6.2.2. In order to preserve confidentiality any notice or disclosure given under this Paragraph shall not disclose any reason for the imposition of the Suspension (see also Paragraphs B.8.2 and B.11). However, any such notice or disclosure shall contain a statement explaining the effect of Suspension as outlined in Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and shall (if such be the case) state that the Police have been apprised of the matter giving rise to the Suspension.

B.8.4 During the Commission Stage it is the responsibility of the Mandated Group to conduct the Investigation in accordance with Section D, to comply with all procedural matters under the Rules of Procedure and to present the case against the Minister at the Hearing under Section E and at the Hearing of any Appeal under Section G.

B.9 B.9.1 To enable them to carry out their respective functions under Paragraphs 2(4)(A)(xiv) and 2(5)(A)(xxiii) of the Structure, every Synod and the General Assembly shall act solely through a group of three persons ("the Mandated Group") which shall have mandated authority to act in the name of the Synod or the General Assembly as the case may be in every matter requiring consideration under those respective functions.

B.9.2 In connection with any such steps under Paragraph B.9.1 as are required to be taken by a Synod, if at any time the Moderator of the Synod, in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister in membership or under the authority of

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

that Synod, s/he shall forthwith in the name of the Synod appoint two persons from the Synod Panel for that Synod and one person from the Joint Panel as provided in Paragraphs B.2 and B.3 to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1.2/4. The Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to the Mandated Group of a District Council called in under Paragraph B.6.1.

B.9.3 In connection with any steps under Paragraph B.9.1 as are required to be taken by General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf), if at any time the Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of the General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister s/he shall forthwith in the name of General Assembly appoint three persons drawn from the Synod Panels and the Joint Panel as provided in Paragraph B.3.3 to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1.2/4. The Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to the Mandated Group of a District Council called in under Paragraph B.6.1.

B.9.4 The whole of this Section B shall apply to cases falling within Paragraph B.9 with the necessary changes and in particular in Paragraph B.8.1 the reference to "the District Council" shall be replaced by a reference to "the Synod" or "General Assembly" as the case may be.

B.9.5 On any occasion throughout the Section O Process where notices and papers are required to be sent to the Moderator of the Synod, then in a case proceeding under Paragraph B.9.3 they shall also be sent to the Deputy General Secretary.

B.10 To initiate the Commission Stage pursuant to Paragraph B.8.1, the Mandated Group in the name of the Council shall take the following steps:

B.10.1 Serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a duly completed Referral Notice which should clearly state the reasons why the Mandated Group believes that a breach of ministerial discipline has or may have occurred and which should also include where possible a summary of the supporting information on the basis of which the Mandated Group has issued the Referral Notice and which must disclose the name and address of any Outside Organisation notified of the Minister's Suspension under either Paragraph B.6.2.2 or Paragraph B.8.3.

B.10.2 Serve on the Minister notice of the issue of the Referral Notice and of his/her Suspension (or of the continuance of his/her Suspension if Paragraph B.6.2 applies).

B.11 The Notice of Suspension, whether issued under Paragraph B.6.2 or Paragraph B.8.1, shall inform the Minister that, in accordance with these Rules of Procedure, any conduct on his/her part during such Suspension which breaches or contravenes Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission in reaching its decision under Section F or Section G as the case may be.

B.12 Once a Referral Notice has been issued by a Mandated Group in any case, no further Referral Notice shall in any circumstances be issued in respect of the subject matter of that referral, save only where the Minister has been the subject of an earlier disciplinary case in which the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission issued a written warning under the provisions of Paragraph F.2.2 or Paragraph G.11.3.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

C. REFERENCE TO AND CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

C.1 On receipt of either a Referral Notice or a Notice of Reference back, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith take the following steps:

C.1.1 Acknowledge receipt of such Notice.

C.1.2 In the case of a Referral Notice, serve on the Minister a copy of the Referral Notice and a Notice which shall invite the Minister's preliminary response.

C.1.3 In the case of a Notice of Reference back, invite any comments from the Parties regarding the Notice and accompanying statement received by them from the General Secretary in accordance with Paragraph G.14.1.

C.1.4 Inform the Convener and the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel (or in their absence or the absence of either of them the person or persons specified in Paragraph C.2.2 or Paragraph C.2.3) ('the Appointers') of the receipt of the Referral Notice or the Notice of Reference back and pass to such person or persons copies thereof and of any other papers which accompany such Notice.

C.1.5 Inform the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council of the receipt of the Referral Notice but not of the contents thereof, apart from the name of the Minister.

C.1.6 On receipt of the Minister's response under Paragraph C.1.2 and any documents which may accompany it, provide the Mandated Group with copies thereof.

C.1.7 In any case arising as a consequence of a Notice of Reference back, where comments are received from either of the parties as a result of the invitation contained in Paragraph C.1.3, provide the other party with copies thereof.

C.2 C.2.1 The Appointers shall, within 7 days of compliance by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission with Paragraph C.1.4 (or within such further time as they shall reasonably require), jointly appoint five (5) persons from the Commission Panel to constitute the Assembly Commission for the hearing of that case, and in making such appointments they shall have regard to the provisions of Paragraphs C.2.4 and C.3.

C.2.2 In the absence of either the Convener or the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel, the General Secretary shall act jointly with the other one in the appointment of the Assembly Commission under Paragraph C.2.1.

C.2.3 In the absence of both the Convener of the Commission Panel and the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel, the General Secretary and the Moderator of the General Assembly shall together appoint the Assembly Commission under Paragraph C.2.1.

C.2.4 The Appointers shall (so far as possible) (i) appoint at least one man and at least one woman and at least one minister and at least one lay person onto the Assembly Commission and (ii) have regard to the nature of the case, the need for balance and the skills, specialisation and cultural understanding of the members of the Commission Panel.

C.3 C.3.1 No person shall be appointed to sit as a member of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission in the hearing of any case in which he/she has any involvement, whether as a member of any local church, District Council or Synod connected with the case or (in the event of a re-hearing under Paragraph G.11.7) a member of the previous Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission, or whether on account of some personal or pastoral involvement as a result of which it is considered by those responsible for selecting the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

for that case or by the proposed appointee him/herself that it would not be appropriate for him/her to hear the case.

C.3.2 Under the Rules of Procedure, either of the parties may object on any of the grounds set out in Paragraph C.3.1 to the proposed appointment of any person to the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission for the hearing of his/her case and, in the event of any such objection, the decision of those charged under the Section O Process with making the appointment shall be final and binding.

C.4 C.4.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to each member of the Commission Panel whom the Appointers propose to appoint to the Assembly Commission notice of his/her proposed appointment, stating the name of the Minister but containing no further details of the case. The Notice shall draw the invitee's attention to Paragraph C.3.1 and shall request confirmation that the invitee is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Assembly Commission.

C.4.2 The Invitee shall within 7 days of receipt of such Notice serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a Notice indicating whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so, confirming compliance with Paragraph C.3.1.

C.5 C.5.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice on the Parties setting out the name and office or credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraphs C.3.1 and requiring notice of objection to any of the proposed appointees under that Paragraph to be served upon the Secretary of the Assembly Commission within 14 days of the service of the Notice given under this Paragraph.

C.5.2 Any such Notice of Objection must state the grounds for such objection.

C.5.3 To ensure that the Commission Stage is moved along in a timely manner, any Notice of Objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.

C.5.4 The Appointers shall consider any objection properly delivered and shall decide whether to uphold or reject the objection.

C.5.5 If they reject the objection the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice thereof on the objector.

C.5.6 If they uphold the objection, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice thereof upon the objector, the person to whom the objection was taken and the other Party upon whom the Notice referred to in Paragraph C.4.1 was served.

C.5.7 In the event of any objection being upheld, the procedure outlined in Paragraphs C.2 to C.5 shall be repeated to complete the appointment of the Assembly Commission and to give notice to the Parties of the person appointed.

C.6 The Appointers shall appoint one member of the Assembly Commission to be its Convener, but s/he shall not have a casting vote, unless the Assembly Commission shall in circumstances arising under Paragraph C.7.1 of these Rules consist of an even number of members.

C.7 C.7.1 In the event that during the Commission Stage any member of the Assembly Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on the Assembly Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Assembly Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

C.7.2 In the event that in the terms of Paragraph C.7.1 the Assembly Commission shall be reduced to fewer than three members at any time after it has taken any steps under Section E the Assembly Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Assembly Commission shall be appointed under this Section C.

C.7.3 Once the Assembly Commission has been duly constituted and has taken any steps under Section E, no person shall subsequently be appointed to serve on that Assembly Commission.

C.7.4 If the Convener of the Assembly Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reasons stated in Paragraph C.7.1, the remaining members shall, following consultation with the Appointers, appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.

D. INVESTIGATION BY THE MANDATED GROUP

D.1 It shall be the role of the Mandated Group to investigate the matters which are the subject of the Referral Notice with a view to presenting the case in the name of the Council at the Hearing.

D.2 In the course of the Investigation, the Mandated Group shall normally interview the person or persons lodging the initial complaint (if any) and the Minister concerned and shall make all other investigations which it considers necessary.

D.3 Any person being interviewed in accordance with Paragraph D.2 may, if s/he so wishes, have a friend present with him/her at such interview.

D.4 In cases where Paragraph E.7.1 applies, the Mandated Group may itself monitor the criminal proceedings, but shall otherwise for the period specified in that Paragraph suspend its own investigation of any matter under the Section O Process which might also be related to the criminal proceedings.

E. FORMAL PROCEDURES UP TO AND INCLUDING THE HEARING

E.1 The Assembly Commission's sole purpose in conducting the Hearing under this Section E is to establish whether or not there has been a breach of ministerial discipline, having regard to Paragraph 3 of Part I.

E.2 The object of Paragraphs E.3, E.4 and E.5 is to ensure that the Parties are aware beforehand of the evidence which will be presented at the Hearing and that they have time to consider the same.

E.3 E.3.1 Unless the case is subject to compulsory adjournment under Paragraph E.7, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall as soon as practicable after the appointment of the Assembly Commission:

E.3.1.1 provide the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission with (i) copies of the Referral Notice, (ii) the Minister's response under Paragraph C.1.2 and (iii) any documents which may accompany it and

E.3.1.2 in the case of any Assembly Commission appointed as a consequence of a Notice of Reference back, provide the Convener and the other members thereof with copies of (i) the Notice of Reference back, (ii) the documents, statements and information delivered to the previous Assembly Commission in accordance with these Rules of Procedure and (iii) any comments received from the parties as a result of the invitation contained in Paragraph C.1.3 and

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

E.3.1.3 consult with the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission and, where possible, with the Parties as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, decide thereupon.

E.3.2 Having complied with Paragraph E.3.1, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith serve on each of the Parties a notice which shall:

E.3.2.1 notify the date, time and place of the Hearing,

E.3.2.2 notify the Parties that the Referral Notice and any statement from the Minister lodged in response to the Notice referred to in Paragraph C.1.2 will be part of the documentary evidence at the Hearing,

E.3.2.3 call upon the Parties to lodge copies of any documents or of any further statements relating to matters to which they may wish to refer at the Hearing (the Notice should indicate to the Parties that copies of any such documents or statements will be made available to the other Party),

E.3.2.4 call upon the Parties to state the names of persons whom they propose to invite to attend the Hearing and, briefly, the purpose of their attendance and the approximate length of time which each of the Parties will require at the Hearing,

E.3.2.5 call upon the Mandated Group to nominate a spokesperson (who need not be a member of the Mandated Group) to act on its behalf in the questioning of witnesses and in the general presentation of the case and indicate the name and status of such person,

E.3.2.6 call upon the Minister to state whether s/he wishes to have a person present with him/her at the Hearing pursuant to Paragraph E.10.1 and, if so, call upon the Minister to indicate the name and status of such person and whether s/he will be present to give the Minister support and advice under Paragraph E.10.1.1 or to present the Minister's case under Paragraph E.10.1.2.

E.4 E.4.1 Within 14 days of the service of the Notice under Paragraph E.3, the Parties shall comply with Paragraphs E.3.2.3 and E.3.2.4 by serving on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the documents, statements and information requested, whereupon the Secretary shall forthwith provide copies thereof for the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission.

E.4.2 As soon as possible after the expiration of such period of 14 days referred to in Paragraph E.4.1, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall provide each Party with copies of the documents, statements and information delivered by the other Party under Paragraph E.4.1.

E.4.3 The Parties shall respond to the respective invitations contained in Paragraphs E.3.2.5 and E.3.2.6 no later than 14 days prior to the date set for the Hearing and copies of each Party's response shall thereupon be sent by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to the other Party.

E.5 E.5.1 It shall be for the Assembly Commission to decide on all procedural and evidential matters, both before and during the Hearing. It may make such directions as it deems appropriate regarding such matters and fix a time for compliance with such directions, if necessary postponing or adjourning the Hearing to enable such compliance to be made. Such matters shall include the following:

E.5.1.1 All matters relating to the form of the written material lodged by the Parties in accordance with Paragraph E.4.1 and the extent to which the same may be later amended or supplemented, and to which further written material may be introduced and disclosed and

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

E.5.1.2 The extent to which written statements, videos and other recordings and transcripts shall in exceptional circumstances be admitted as evidence at the Hearing.

E.5.2.1 Having notified the Parties prior to the Hearing, the Assembly Commission may invite any person with expert or specialist knowledge in any particular field to attend the Hearing with a view to that person giving evidence at the Hearing and may issue such requests and directions in that connection as it considers appropriate.

E.5.2.2 The legal advisers to The United Reformed Church shall be available for the purpose of advising the Assembly Commission on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation at any point in the Section O Process.

E.6 E.6.1 Either Party may at any time request an advancement or postponement or adjournment of the Hearing, setting out his/her/its reasons for such request.

E.6.2 The Assembly Commission may at any time advance, postpone or adjourn the Hearing as it considers it appropriate, whether of its own accord or at the request of either Party, but always having regard to the need to conclude the Section O Process as expeditiously as possible. Notice of the amended hearing date, time and place shall be served on the Parties by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission.

E.6.3 Any advancement of the hearing date shall normally require the consent of both Parties.

E.7 E.7.1 Where (i) the Minister is the subject of a criminal charge for an alleged offence falling into any of the categories set out in Paragraph E.7.2 below relevant to the subject matter of the Section O Process or (ii) information has been laid before the Police which may result in such relevant criminal charge being brought against him/her, in either such event the Assembly Commission shall (unless the circumstances of Paragraph E.9.1 apply) postpone or adjourn its own proceedings pending the verdict of the criminal courts (whether or not on appeal) on the charges brought against the Minister (as to which see Paragraph E.7.7) or the withdrawal of the charge (in relation to alternative (i) above) or the notification that no charge is to be brought (in relation to alternative (ii) above).

E.7.2 The categories of criminal offence relevant to adjournment under Paragraph E.7.1 are:

E.7.2.1 unlawful killing, or deliberate or reckless, actual or threatened, infliction of physical injury to the person or damage to the property of another,

E.7.2.2 rape, sexual abuse or any other offence of a sexual nature,

E.7.2.3 criminal offences relating to stalking and/or sexual harassment,

E.7.2.4 fraud, blackmail, theft or burglary.

E.7.3 If the case falls within this Paragraph E.7, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall, as soon as practicable after the appointment of the Assembly Commission, notify the Parties of the compulsory adjournment of the case.

E.7.4 It shall be the responsibility of the Mandated Group to procure a duly certified Court record or memorandum of the decision of the criminal or civil court in connection with any such case and to lodge it with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, whereupon the Section O Process shall be re-activated and the case brought to a Hearing as soon as possible, unless the Minister shall have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission within twenty-eight days of the passing of the sentence in the criminal case, written evidence that s/he has lodged an appeal against the verdict of the criminal court on the charges brought against the Minister (as to which see Paragraph E.7.7).

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

E.7.5 In the event of the Minister being convicted of any criminal offence, whether or not within the categories listed in Paragraph E.7.2, the Assembly Commission shall for the purposes of the Section O Process regard the commission of such offence(s) as proved.

E.7.6 If the Minister has given to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the written evidence of appeal in the criminal case referred to in Paragraph E.7.4, it shall be his/her responsibility to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission of the outcome of his/her appeal in the criminal case as soon as s/he becomes aware of it and to supply to the said Secretary a duly certified court record or memorandum of the decision on the said appeal, whereupon the Section O Process shall be reactivated and the case brought to a hearing as soon as possible. Meanwhile the Minister shall respond promptly to any requests for information from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission as to the progress of the appeal in the criminal case. If the Minister fails to comply with the provisions of this Paragraph, the said Secretary may him/herself seek and obtain the required information as to the progress and outcome of the appeal in the criminal case.

E.7.7 The purpose of this Paragraph is to make clear that the compulsory adjournment of a Section O case in circumstances falling within Paragraph E.7.1 ceases immediately the criminal court has reached a verdict (whether or not on appeal) as to whether the Minister is guilty of the offence(s) with which s/he has been charged and will not continue during any extended period in a criminal case where the court, having reached its verdict, has deferred sentencing to a future date or where the Minister is appealing against the sentence only and not against the guilty verdict itself.

E.8 Any of the following may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission in reaching its decision under Paragraph F.2 that is to say:

E.8.1 Any obstruction or unreasonable delay on the part of either of the Parties in complying with the procedural steps prior to the Hearing and/or

E.8.2 The failure by the Minister to attend at the Hearing without satisfactory explanation and/or

E.8.3 Any obstruction caused by either of the Parties to the Assembly Commission in the conduct of the Hearing itself and/or

E.8.4 Any conduct on the part of the Minister during his/her Suspension under the Section O Process which breaches or contravenes Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and/or

E.8.5 Any failure, unnecessary delay or obstruction on the part of the Minister in complying with the requirements of Paragraph E.7.6.

E.9 E.9.1 The Assembly Commission has no power to accept the voluntary resignation of a Minister. A Minister may however at any time during the Section O Process and of his/her own free will make a written statement to the Assembly Commission admitting the truth of some or all of the facts or circumstances alleged, on the basis of which the Assembly Commission would consider it correct to make a decision to delete under Paragraph F.2.1 or to issue a written warning under Paragraph F.2.2. In such circumstances the Assembly Commission can, if it considers it appropriate so to do and having informed the Minister that the consequences of such admission might be a decision to delete or to issue a written warning, convene, conduct and conclude the Hearing and on the basis of that admission reach its decision in accordance with Paragraph F.2.

E.9.2 If as a result of its investigation during the Commission Stage, the Mandated Group unanimously comes to the view that no breach of discipline on the part of the Minister has occurred or at least that no breach can be established to the standard of proof required,

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

it may give written notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission before the Hearing date that as a consequence it does not intend to press the case against the Minister. Thereupon the members of the Assembly Commission shall consult together to decide whether they still require the Parties to attend a formal Hearing before them or whether in the circumstances their attendance can be dispensed with. If they elect for the former, the Hearing will take place as planned. If they elect for the latter, they may in consultation together dispense with the formal Hearing and come to the decision to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers under Paragraph F.2.1. If this procedure is adopted, the said consultation shall constitute the Hearing and its decision shall be effective for all purposes as though a formal Hearing had taken place.

E.9.3 Paragraph E.9.2 shall not apply where the Mandated Group, whilst not pressing the case for Deletion, requests the Assembly Commission to issue a written warning under Paragraph F.2.2. In such a case a formal Hearing shall take place.

E.10 E.10.1 The Minister may invite one person to accompany him/her at the Hearing ('the accompanying person') in which case either of the following shall apply:

E.10.1.1 If the Minister elects to present his/her response, the accompanying person may give him/her support and advice but shall not address the Assembly Commission nor question the Minister or any of the witnesses nor present the Minister's response nor take any active part in the Hearing.

E.10.1.2 If the Minister elects to invite the accompanying person to present the Minister's response, the Minister will not be permitted in the interests of the good ordering of the procedures at the Hearing to question the witnesses nor present the response himself/herself.

E.10.2 Neither the spokesperson nominated by the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraph E.3.2.5 nor the Minister's accompanying person invited to present his/her response under Paragraph E.10.1.2 shall be permitted to give evidence in the case or personal testimony as to the Minister's character, either by written statement or orally at the Hearing. Where the Minister has invited a person to be present at the Hearing to give support and advice only under Paragraph E.10.1.1, the Assembly Commission may, in its absolute discretion if it sees fit, consider a written statement received from such person prior to the Hearing strictly limited to personal testimony as to the character of the Minister, but shall not permit him/her to give evidence in the case or oral testimony as to character at the Hearing.

E.11 All members of the Assembly Commission or, if Paragraph C.7 shall apply, those persons, not fewer than three, who are acting as the Assembly Commission shall attend the Hearing, which may only proceed provided that the Assembly Commission remains quorate throughout the Hearing. No member of the Assembly Commission who does not attend the whole of the Hearing shall play any part in the making of the decision reached under Paragraph F.2.

E.12 E.12.1 The Hearing must be conducted in private and only the following persons shall be permitted to attend:

The Members of the Assembly Commission

The Secretary of the Assembly Commission or a duly appointed Deputy (see Paragraphs A.8 and E.12.3)

The Minister

The accompanying person defined in Paragraph E.10.1

The members of the Mandated Group

The Spokesperson for the Mandated Group (if not already a member of the Mandated Group)

Any witnesses (but only while giving evidence, unless the Assembly Commission otherwise directs)

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

A representative of the Church's legal advisers (see Paragraph E.14.3)
Any persons responsible for operating the recording equipment or otherwise preparing the verbatim record of the proceedings referred to in Paragraph E.12.4
Any other person by the direction of the Assembly Commission and with prior notification to the Parties.

E.12.2 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall (unless excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Assembly Commission as may be appropriate and of ensuring compliance with Paragraph E.12.4. S/he shall not be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

E.12.3 In the event that the Secretary of the Assembly Commission cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Assembly Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1. Such person shall carry out the duties set out in Paragraph E.12.2 but shall not be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

E.12.4 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission or his/her deputy shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Assembly Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record, which shall be transcribed in the event of an appeal.

E.13 E.13.1 The conduct of the Hearing is in the hands of the Assembly Commission and, subject to the Assembly Commission's overriding discretion, the order of procedure shall be as follows:

E.13.2 The Mandated Group through its spokesperson shall be given the opportunity to make an opening submission and then to present its evidence and question its witnesses. Persons called to give evidence by the Mandated Group are open to questioning by the Minister or his/her spokesperson as the case may be.

E.13.3 If the Minister is presenting his/her own case, s/he shall then be given the opportunity to present his/her evidence in person, following which s/he is then open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Mandated Group.

E.13.4 If a spokesperson is appearing for the Minister, that spokesperson shall be given the opportunity of questioning the Minister, who shall then be open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Mandated Group.

E.13.5 The Minister may if s/he wishes remain silent and furthermore cannot be compelled to attend the Hearing of the Assembly Commission and it is a matter for the Assembly Commission in considering its decision as to what weight should be attached to the Minister's silence or non-attendance.

E.13.6 The Minister or his/her spokesperson shall then have the opportunity of questioning any further witnesses whom s/he wishes to call and when each one has given his/her evidence that witness shall then be open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Mandated Group.

E.14 E.14.1 The members of the Assembly Commission shall be entitled to ask questions and also to interject during the examination of witnesses if they consider the questioning to be oppressive or immaterial to the matter in hand or if for any other reason they consider it appropriate so to do.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

E.14.2 Persons who have already been questioned may be asked to answer further questions later in the Hearing if it appears to the Assembly Commission that this would be helpful and appropriate in the circumstances.

E.14.3 A representative of the Church's legal advisers shall normally be present at the Hearing (unless his/her attendance has been expressly dispensed with by the Assembly Commission) in order to advise and address the Assembly Commission on matters of procedure, evidence and interpretation, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Assembly Commission, nor shall s/he be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides upon the case.

E.15 At the Hearing the Parties shall be allowed to question any such person as attends the Hearing under Paragraph E.5.2.1 and to comment on any evidence, information, opinion or advice offered by him/her.

E.16 E.16.1 E.16.1.1 In all cases the burden of proving the case against the Minister shall fall upon the Mandated Group.

E.16.1.2 In considering the evidence before it, the Assembly Commission shall apply the civil standard of proof, which requires that decisions on disputed allegations shall be reached on the balance of probability.

E.16.2 During the Commission Stage of any case brought against a Minister, the Assembly Commission cannot take cognisance of any matter which has already been part of the body of evidence laid before any Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission during the Commission Stage of any previous case brought against that Minister unless (i) the decision reached in the previous case (whether or not on appeal) fell within Paragraph F.2.2 and (ii) such matter in the opinion of the current Assembly Commission falls within the scope of the conduct, statement, act or omission in respect of which the written warning referred to in that Paragraph was issued. The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall have authority to inspect the papers of that earlier case for the sole purpose of ensuring compliance with this Paragraph.

E.16.3 The Assembly Commission may at its discretion have regard to information concerning any matter which, although not referred to specifically in the Referral Notice (including any such arising during the Commission Stage), is in its opinion germane to the issue(s) specified in the Referral Notice provided that (i) it believes it right and proper to do so and (ii) it affords to each of the Parties a proper opportunity of considering and refuting or challenging any such information.

E.17 No person appearing in any capacity before the Assembly Commission at the Hearing (as distinct from those serving the Assembly Commission in compliance with Paragraph E.12.4) shall make any record of any part of the proceedings at the Hearing by means of any tape recording system or other mechanical or electronic recording device or system.

E.18 When the process of presenting and examining the evidence at the Hearing has been concluded, the spokesperson for the Mandated Group and the Minister or the accompanying person as appropriate (in that order) shall be given the opportunity to address the Assembly Commission, following which the Convenor of the Assembly Commission shall announce to the Parties that the members of the Assembly Commission would at that point retire to consider their decision which would not be announced that day but would be notified to the Parties in accordance with Paragraph F.3. The Hearing is thus concluded.

F. THE DECISION of the ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

F.1 F.1.1 Following the conclusion of the Hearing, the Assembly Commission shall, all meeting together but in the absence of the Parties, consider the evidence presented to it, in order first to determine whether the allegations (or any of them) made against the Minister have been proved to its satisfaction and, if so, whether they are sufficiently serious as to amount to a breach of discipline by the Minister in the light of Paragraph 3 of Part I.

F.1.2 If the Assembly Commission concludes that a breach of discipline has so arisen, it must then consider whether it should direct the name of the Minister to be deleted from the Roll or whether in the circumstances the issue of a written warning would be sufficient. In this context the Assembly Commission may take into account, in addition to the seriousness of the allegations, such factors as the degree of remorse shown by the Minister and his/her preparedness to change or to undergo counselling or training.

F.2.1 Having completed the process set out in Paragraph F.1, the Assembly Commission shall reach its decision (either unanimously or by majority vote) which shall be either to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers or to allow his/her name to remain on the Roll of Ministers.

F.2.2 If the Assembly Commission considers that there has been some conduct, statement, act or omission on the part of the Minister which, although not sufficiently serious to justify deletion, is nevertheless of sufficient concern to justify lesser disciplinary action against the Minister it may, whilst allowing the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll and as part of its decision, issue a written warning to the Minister that any continuance or repetition of any of the disciplinary matters complained of might be considered a cause for deletion by a future Assembly Commission.

F.2.3 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, whether or not it also decides to issue a written warning, the Assembly Commission may in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3) append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to moderators of synod, district councils, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also to any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister only and that they are of an advisory nature and do not form part of the decision.

F.2.4 If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Assembly Commission is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which it considers ought to be placed upon any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting moderators of synod, district councils, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision.

F.3 In recording its decision the Assembly Commission shall comply with the following:

F.3.1 It shall state whether its decision is unanimous or by a majority.

F.3.2 It shall set out any written warning issued to the Minister under Paragraph F.2.2.

F.3.3 It shall append a written statement of its reasons for reaching its decision, but shall not be obliged (unless it wishes to do so) to comment in detail on all or any of the matters of evidence laid before it.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

F.4 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Assembly Commission in the Section O Process, except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph J.2, and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph F.7.

F.5 F.5.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall within 10 days of the date of the decision serve on the Minister and the Mandated Group notice of the decision and of the written Statement of Reasons given under Paragraph F.3.3. Such notice shall draw the attention of the Minister and the Mandated Group to the strict time limit for serving Notice of Appeal under Paragraph G.1.1.

F.5.2 If Paragraph F.2.2 applies, s/he shall at the same time (i) serve on the Minister any written warning referred to in that Paragraph, (ii) send a copy thereof to the Mandated Group and (iii) send to the Minister and the Mandated Group copies of any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision of the Assembly Commission under Paragraph F.2.3 or Paragraph F.2.4.

F.6 F.6.1 At the same time as s/he serves on the Minister and the Mandated Group the documents referred to in Paragraphs F.5.1 and F.5.2, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Secretary for Ministries and, in a case arising under Paragraph B.9.3, the Deputy General Secretary a Notice to the effect that a decision has been reached by the Assembly Commission, simply stating whether the decision of the Assembly Commission has been to delete or to retain the name of the Minister on the Roll of Ministers, and, if the latter, whether or not a decision to issue a written warning was also made. Such notice shall not contain any further information other than that the decision is still subject to the possibility of an appeal being lodged and that a further Notice will be sent under Paragraph F.6.3 (if there is no Appeal) or under Paragraph G.1.2.1 or Paragraph G.1.2.2 (if there is an Appeal).

F.6.2 If an appeal is lodged by either Party, the procedure contained in Section G shall apply.

F.6.3 If within the time specified in Paragraph G.1.1 no appeal is lodged by either Party, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall within 10 days of the expiration of such period (or within 10 days of the decision itself if the first proviso to Paragraph F.7.2 applies or immediately upon receipt by him/her of irrevocable notices from both parties of the waiver of their rights of appeal if the second proviso to Paragraph F.7.2 applies) send to the Minister and the Mandated Group and the persons referred to in Paragraph F.6.1 notice of that fact and of the consequent termination of the Minister's Suspension in accordance with Paragraph F.7.1 or F.7.2 whichever is applicable and at the same time shall send to those persons (with the exception of the Secretary of the District Council and the Secretary for Ministries on the grounds of confidentiality) copies of the Statement of Reasons sent to the Minister and the Mandated Group in accordance with Paragraph F.5.1. At the same time the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to all those persons, including the Secretary of the District Council and the Secretary for Ministries, copies of the documents sent in accordance with Paragraph F.5.2. The Mandated Group shall thereupon comply with Paragraph H.4.

F.6.4 At the time of compliance with Paragraph F.6.3, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall also send to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation notice of the decision of the Assembly Commission, including, in the event of a decision not to delete, the date of cessation of the Minister's Suspension, together with details of any recommendations or guidance issued by the Assembly Commission as appended to its decision which it expressly states to be its wish to pass on to such Outside Organisation.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

F.7 F.7.1 In the event of the Assembly Commission deciding to delete and there being no appeal against that decision under Paragraph 4.1 of Part I within the period allowed under Paragraph G.1, the Suspension shall continue up to the first day after the expiration of such period, on which day the deletion shall automatically take effect. The Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on such day.

F.7.2 In the event of the Assembly Commission deciding not to delete and there being no appeal against that decision under Paragraph 4.2 of Part I within the period allowed under Paragraph G.1, the Suspension shall automatically cease on the first day after the expiration of such period and the Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on that date, provided that (i) where the Mandated Group has formally signified to the Assembly Commission under Paragraph E.9.2 that it does not intend to press the case for any disciplinary action to be taken against the Minister and the Assembly Commission decides not to issue a written warning, the Assembly Commission may as an appendage to its decision not to delete state that the Minister's Suspension shall terminate with immediate effect and in that case the Section O case shall be regarded as concluded on the date on which the Assembly Commission formally notifies its decision to the Parties under Paragraph F.5 or (ii) where the decision is to allow the Minister's name to remain on the Roll of Ministers and no written warning is issued and where both parties within the time allowed for an appeal to be lodged state in writing and irrevocably that they waive their rights of appeal, the Minister's Suspension shall cease and the Section O case shall be concluded, both events taking place on the date on which the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall have received such statements from both parties (as to the notification of the cessation of the Suspension, see Paragraphs F.6.3 and F.6.4).

G. APPEALS PROCEDURE

G.1 G.1.1 Any Notice of Appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission given under Paragraph 4 of Part I must be served on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission no later than 21 days from the date of service of the decision of the Assembly Commission on the appellant and for this purpose time shall be of the essence, and such Notice shall state the grounds of the appeal (which may be in detail or in summary form as the appellant chooses).

G.1.2 G.1.2.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith notify the General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged, at the same time passing on to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal together with the body of papers laid before the Assembly Commission in hearing the case and the Record of the Hearing as defined in Paragraph E.12.4. The General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial and administrative capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.

G.1.2.2 At the same time the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall also notify the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Secretary for Ministries and, in a case arising under Paragraph B.9.3, the Deputy General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged against the decision of the Assembly Commission.

G.1.3 Except for those Rules which by their context are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure, the Rules set out in Section E shall also apply to Section G (with the necessary changes).

G.2 On receipt of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1, the General Secretary shall as soon as possible take the following steps:

G.2.1 Acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Appeal, send to the Appellant a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4) and follow the procedure set out in either Paragraph G.2.2 or Paragraph G.2.3.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

G.2.2 (If the Appeal is brought by the Minister under Paragraph 4.1 of Part I) serve Notice of the receipt of the Appeal on the Mandated Group, attaching to such Notice a copy of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1.1 and of any accompanying statement of reasons and a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4) and call upon the Mandated Group to submit within 21 days from the date of service of the Notice under this Paragraph a counter-statement containing any comments which the Mandated Group wishes to make in connection with the Appeal or

G.2.3 (If the Appeal is brought by the Mandated Group under Paragraph 4.2 of Part I) serve Notice of the receipt of the Appeal on the Minister, attaching to such Notice a copy of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1.1 and of any accompanying statement of reasons and a copy of the Record of the Hearing (see Paragraph E.12.4) and call upon the Minister to submit within 21 days from the date of service of the Notice under this Paragraph a counter-statement containing any comments which the Minister wishes to make in connection with the Appeal.

G.3 G.3.1 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within 14 days of receipt by the General Secretary of the Notice of Appeal under Paragraph G.1.1 of these Rules (or within such further time as they shall reasonably require) appoint the Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph G.3.2 and Paragraphs G.4 to G.7.

G.3.2 The Appeals Commission for the hearing of each such appeal shall consist of the following five persons:

G.3.2.1 A Convener who shall be a member of the United Reformed Church (but not necessarily a member of the General Assembly) with legal and/or tribunal experience to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and

G.3.2.2 The Moderator of the General Assembly or if for any reason he/she should be unable to serve, a former Moderator of the General Assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and

G.3.2.3 Three other members of the General Assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly.

G.3.3 The relevant date for ascertaining whether persons qualify for appointment under Paragraph G.3.2 is the date on which under the Rules of Procedure the Secretary of the Assembly Commission notifies the General Secretary that an appeal has been lodged against the decision of the Assembly Commission.

G.3.4 In selecting persons for appointment to the Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph G.3.2 , the officers of the General Assembly shall, so far as possible, apply the same criteria as are set out in Paragraphs A.6.1 and C.2.4 in relation to appointments to the Commission Panel and to Assembly Commissions.

G.3.5 All persons proposed for appointment to an Appeals Commission, in any capacity, are subject to Paragraph C.3.1.

G.4 G.4.1 The General Secretary shall send to each of the proposed appointees for the Appeals Commission an invitation to serve on the Appeals Commission for the hearing of the Appeal in that case, naming the Minister concerned but supplying no further information about the case.

G.4.2 The Notice of Invitation to serve shall draw the attention of each proposed appointee to Paragraph C.3.1 and shall request confirmation that s/he is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Appeals Commission.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

G.4.3 The Invitee shall within 7 days of receipt of the Notice of Invitation serve on the General Secretary a Notice indicating whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so, confirming compliance with Paragraph C.3.1.

G.5 G.5.1 The General Secretary shall serve notice on the Parties, setting out the name and office or credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraphs C.3.1 and C.3.2 and requiring notice of objection to any of the proposed appointees under Paragraph C.3.2 to be served upon the General Secretary within 14 days of the service of the notice given under this Paragraph.

G.5.2 Any such Notice of Objection must state the grounds of such objection.

G.5.3 To ensure that the appeals process is moved along in a timely manner, any Notice of Objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.

G.5.4 The Officers of the General Assembly shall consider every objection properly notified and shall decide whether to uphold or to reject the objection.

G.5.5 If they reject the objection, the General Secretary shall serve notice thereof on the objector.

G.5.6 If they uphold the objection, the General Secretary shall serve notice thereof on the objector, the person to whom the objection was taken and the other Party on whom the Notice specified in Paragraph G.5.1 was served.

G.5.7 In the event of any objection being upheld, the procedure outlined in Paragraphs G.4 and G.5 of these Rules shall be repeated to complete the appointment of the Appeals Commission and to give notice to the Parties of the person appointed.

G.6 The Convener of the Appeals Commission shall not have a casting vote, unless the Appeals Commission shall, in circumstances arising under Paragraph G.7.1, consist of an even number of members.

G.7 G.7.1 In the event that any member of the Appeals Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on the Appeals Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Appeals Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.

G.7.2 In the event that for the reasons stated in Paragraph G.7.1 the Appeals Commission shall consist of fewer than three members at any time after the Appeals Commission has taken any steps in connection with the Appeal, the Appeals Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Appeals Commission shall be appointed in accordance with Paragraphs G.3 to G.7 to hear the Appeal.

G.7.3 Once the Appeals Commission has been validly constituted and has taken any steps in accordance with this Section G, no person shall be subsequently appointed to serve on that Appeals Commission.

G.7.4 If the Moderator of the General Assembly is unable to serve, the remaining members shall, following consultation with the Officers of the General Assembly, appoint a former Moderator of the General Assembly to be the Convener of the Appeals Commission in his/her place.

G.7.5 Notwithstanding that, during the conduct of the appeal, a new person may assume the office of Moderator of the General Assembly, the person previously holding such office shall continue to serve as a member of the Appeals Commission to the exclusion of his/her successor in that office.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

G.8 Each member of the Appeals Commission when appointed shall receive from the General Secretary copies of the following:

G.8.1 Notice of the Assembly Commission's decision.

G.8.2 Any statement of reasons given by the Assembly Commission.

G.8.3 Any written warning issued.

G.8.4 Any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision in accordance with Paragraph F.2.3 or Paragraph F.2.4 as the case may be.

G.8.5 The Notice of Appeal, containing the grounds for the appeal.

G.8.6 Any counter-statement received under Paragraph G.2.2 or Paragraph G.2.3.

G.8.7 The body of papers laid before the Assembly Commission in hearing the case.

G.8.8 The Record of the Hearing. (See Paragraph E.12.4)

G.9 The Appeals Commission when constituted shall consider the following matters:

G.9.1 Whether there is or may be new information which has come to light and which could not reasonably have been available to the Assembly Commission before its decision was taken under Paragraph F.2.

G.9.2 Whether any such new information would in its opinion have been material in that, had it been tested and proved to the satisfaction of the Assembly Commission, it might have caused it to reach a different decision.

G.9.3 Whether there may have been some procedural irregularity or breach of the rules of natural justice or serious misunderstanding by the Assembly Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Section O Process itself.

G.10 G.10.1 Before reaching its decision on the Appeal, the Appeals Commission shall constitute a Hearing at which the Parties shall attend before the Appeals Commission.

G.10.2 The General Secretary shall consult with the Convener and the other members of the Appeals Commission and, where possible, with the Parties as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, shall decide thereupon and shall forthwith send a notice to the Parties informing them of the arrangements for the Hearing.

G.10.3 At the Hearing of the Appeal, there shall be no further investigation or re-hearing of the evidence nor any further evidence introduced, except for the purpose of considering whether there are sufficient grounds for referring the case for re-hearing in accordance with Paragraph G.11.7.

G.10.4 The General Secretary shall (unless excluded for the reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Appeals Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing. S/he shall not be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

G.10.5 If the General Secretary cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Appeals Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph C.3.1. Such person will carry out the duties set out in Paragraph G.10.4 but shall not be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

G.10.6 The General Secretary or his/her deputy appointed under Paragraph G.10.5 shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Appeals Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record.

G.10.7 A representative of the Church's legal advisers shall normally be present at the Hearing in order to advise and address the Appeals Commission on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation and issues arising under Paragraph G.10.3, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Appeals Commission, nor shall s/he be present when the Appeals Commission deliberates and decides upon the case.

G.10.8 The conduct of the Hearing of the Appeal is in the hands of the Appeals Commission whose Convener will at the outset of the Hearing read out the decision of the Assembly Commission.

G.10.9 The Convener will then invite the Parties (commencing with the appellant) to make oral representations to the Appeals Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.

G.10.10 The Hearing will then be concluded.

G.11 The Appeals Commission shall at the conclusion of the Hearing and all together but in the absence of the Parties and of the General Secretary and of the legal adviser consider and arrive at any of the following decisions (which may be taken unanimously or by a majority vote) always having in mind Paragraph 3 of Part I:

G.11.1 It may uphold the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete or

G.11.2 It may uphold in its entirety the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete (whether or not this also includes a decision to issue a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph F.2.2) or

G.11.3 It may uphold the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete, but in addition may issue a written warning to the Minister in the terms of Paragraph F.2.2 if the Assembly Commission has not itself already done so or

G.11.4 If the Assembly Commission has decided not to delete but has issued a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph F.2.2 the Appeals Commission may uphold the decision not to delete but may direct that the written warning be withdrawn or

G.11.5 It may reverse the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete or

G.11.6 It may reverse the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete, but may if it considers it appropriate issue a written warning to the Minister in the terms of Paragraph F.2.2 or

G.11.7 It may refer the case for re-hearing by another duly constituted Assembly Commission (but only if it considers that there has been some procedural irregularity or serious misunderstanding by the Assembly Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Section O Process itself or if material new information becomes available which could not reasonably have been produced before the Assembly Commission).

G.12 There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Appeals Commission and (unless Paragraph G.11.7 applies) the decision of the Appeals Commission shall bring the Minister's Suspension to an end.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

G.13 In recording its decision the Appeals Commission shall comply with the following:

G.13.1 It shall state whether its decision is unanimous or by a majority.

G.13.2 It shall set out any written warning issued to the Minister under Paragraph G.11.2, G.11.3 or G.11.6.

G.13.3 It shall append a written statement of its reasons for reaching its decision, but shall not be obliged (unless it wishes to do so) to comment in detail on all or any of the matters of evidence laid before it.

G.13.4 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall remain on the Roll of Ministers, whether or not it also decides to issue a written warning, the Appeals Commission may in its written statement (see Paragraph G.13.3) append such recommendations to its decision as it considers will be helpful to moderators of synod, district councils, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also to any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such recommendations must relate to the future ministry of the Minister and that they will be advisory only and are not part of the decision.

G.13.5 If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, the Appeals Commission is particularly requested to include in its written statement (see Paragraph F.3.3) appropriate guidance concerning any restrictions which it considers ought to be placed upon any activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion with the object of assisting moderators of synod, district councils, local churches, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Secretary for Ministries and others within the Church and also any relevant Outside Organisation. It is emphasised that any such guidance is of an advisory nature and does not form part of the decision.

G.13.6 In addition to its power to make recommendations or to offer guidance under Paragraph G.13.4 or Paragraph G.13.5 respectively, the Appeals Commission may if it sees fit endorse, overrule, vary or modify in any way any recommendation made or guidance offered by the Assembly Commission in the case in question. For the avoidance of duplication, the Decision Record shall in every case set out in full any recommendations or guidance issued by the Appeals Commission, even where they simply endorse those issued by the Assembly Commission in their entirety.

G.14 As regards the notification of the decision, the General Secretary shall comply with the following:

G.14.1 S/he shall within 10 days of the date of the decision serve on the Minister and the Mandated Group notice of the decision and of the written Statement of Reasons given under Paragraph G.13 and such Notice shall (unless Paragraph G.11.7 applies) state that the Minister's Suspension ceased on the date of the Appeals Commission's decision.

G.14.2 If the decision is taken in accordance with either Paragraph G.11.3 or Paragraph G.11.6, the General Secretary shall at the same time serve on the Minister the written warning referred to in those Paragraphs and shall send a copy thereof to the Mandated Group.

G.14.3 If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph G.11.4, the General Secretary shall at the same time serve on the Minister and on the Mandated Group notice that the written warning issued following the decision of the Assembly Commission is withdrawn.

G.14.4 S/he shall at the same time send to the Minister and the Mandated Group copies of any recommendations or guidance appended to the decision of the Appeals Commission under Paragraph G.13.4 or Paragraph G.13.5 as the case may be.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

G.14.5 S/he shall at the same time send to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Secretary for Ministries and the Deputy General Secretary copies of the documents served on the Minister and the Mandated Group under Paragraphs G.14.1 to G.14.4 and, unless Paragraph G.15 applies, the Mandated Group shall thereupon comply with Paragraph H.4.

G.14.6 At the time of compliance with Paragraph G.14.5, the General Secretary shall also send to the responsible officer of any relevant Outside Organisation notice of the decision of the Appeals Commission, including, in the event of a decision not to delete, the date of cessation of the Minister's Suspension, together with details of any recommendations or guidance issued by the Appeals Commission as appended to its decision which it wishes to pass on to such Outside Organisation.

G.15 If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph G.11.7, the Notice served by the General Secretary under Paragraph G.14.1 shall constitute a Notice of Reference Back. The Assembly Commission appointed for the re-hearing of the case shall not be given any information relating to the conduct of the previous Hearing but may have sight of the documents, statements and information delivered to the Assembly Commission under the provisions contained in Section E.

G.16 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Appeals Commission in the Section O Process, except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph J.2, and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph F.7.3.

G.17 The attention of the Mandated Group is particularly drawn to Paragraph H.4

H. FORMS, SERVICE OF DOCUMENTS and MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

H.1 Model forms of Notice have been prepared to assist those concerned with the Section O Process. The forms of Notice may be amended from time to time and new forms introduced. Use of the model forms is not compulsory and minor variations in the wording will not invalidate the Notice being given, but it is strongly recommended that the model forms be used and followed as closely as possible to avoid confusion and to ensure that all relevant information is supplied at the proper time.

H.2 H.2.1 Service of any document required to be served on an individual shall be deemed to have been properly effected in any of the following ways:

H.2.1.1 By delivering the document personally to the individual to be served.

H.2.1.2 By delivering the document or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the last known address of the individual to be served in a sealed envelope addressed to that individual.

H.2.1.3 In such other manner as the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission (if service relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.

H.2.2 Service of any document required to be served on any Mandated Group shall be deemed to have been properly effected in any of the following ways:

H.2.2.1 By delivering the document personally to that member of the Mandated Group who has been nominated in the Referral Notice to accept service or in the absence of such nomination to the person who signed the Referral Notice, provided that in either case such person is still a member of the Mandated Group when such service is required to be effected.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

H.2.2.2 By delivering the document or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the person referred to in Paragraph H.2.2.1 at the address specified in such nomination or, in the absence of such nomination, at the address given in the Referral Notice.

H.2.2.3 In such other manner as the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission (if service relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.

H.2.3 Service of any document required to be served on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or on the General Secretary shall be deemed to have been properly served if delivered or sent by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be at the address given in the current issue of the Year Book or subsequently notified or (in the absence of any such address in the Year Book) in an envelope addressed to that person at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT and marked "Section O Process".

H.2.4 All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope clearly addressed to the addressee and marked "Private and Confidential".

H.2.5 In the case of service of documents by first class pre-paid post, service shall be deemed to have been effected on the third day after the posting of the Notice.

H.3 Deletion as a result of the Section O Process shall have the effect of terminating any contract, written or oral, between the Minister and the United Reformed Church or any constituent part thereof in relation to his/her ministry.

H.4 Within one month of the conclusion of each case as provided in Paragraph F.7, the Mandated Group shall prepare a written report of its conduct of the case and submit it to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the Minister, the name of the Minister's church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of any individuals involved in the case. The purpose of the report shall be to help those charged with the ongoing review of the operation of the Section O Process to monitor the performance of Mandated Groups and thus to ensure that all appropriate training and assistance is provided and the highest standards are maintained.

For the avoidance of confusion, there is no Section I, the Rules of Procedure moving directly from Section H to Section J.

J. REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY, COSTS & RETENTION OF RECORDS AND PAPERS

J.1 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly all decisions reached by the Assembly Commission and the Appeals Commission in the following manner:

J.1.1 If a decision of the Assembly Commission is subject to appeal, the Report shall simply state that a decision has been reached in a case which is subject to appeal and shall not name the Minister.

J.1.2 If a decision of the Assembly Commission is not subject to appeal and is to delete under Paragraph F.2.1, the Report shall so state and name the Minister.

J.1.3 If a decision of the Assembly Commission is not subject to appeal and is to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers under Paragraph F.2.1 with or without the issue of a written warning under Paragraph F.2.2, the Report shall so state without naming the Minister.

Section O: Replacement of existing Part II

J.1.4 In any case which goes before the Appeals Commission, if the decision is to delete, the Report shall accord with Paragraph J.1.2 and if the decision is to allow the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers with or without the issue of a written warning, the Report shall accord with Paragraph J.1.3.

J.2 The cost of operating the Section O Process and the reasonable and proper expenses of persons attending a Hearing and the costs of any reports obtained by or on the authority of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of such process (but excluding any costs of representation) shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.

J.3 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall be responsible for the keeping of the record of decisions taken by the Assembly Commission and by the Appeals Commission, and for the custody of all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. J. S.'

Document 5

Text related to Resolution 13

MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

PART II – not subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

A. GENERAL

A.1 The following is a list of definitions of terms as used in the Incapacity Procedure:–

- **“APRC”** means the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee which operates under the General Assembly of the Church
- **“Appeals Commission”** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding each appeal dealt with under that process
- **“Appeals Review Commission”** means the Commission consisting of three person constituted for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each appeal under Part II, Section L of the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Assembly Commission”** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under that process
- **“Basis of Union”** means the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church
- **“Church”** means the United Reformed Church
- **“Commencement Notice”** means the Notice sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.3 in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Consultation Group”** means the group of persons required to be consulted in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.1 as to whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated
- **“Decision Record”** means the record of the Decision made by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be in the case of any Minister under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure

- **“Disciplinary Process”** means the Process operated by the Church for the purpose of exercising ministerial discipline contained in Section O of the Church’s Manual
- **“District Council”** means that District Council which exercises oversight of the Minister in accordance with its function under Paragraph 2(3)(i) of the Structure (unless such meaning is excluded by the context) and references to District Councils shall be understood to include Area Councils in Scotland, such Area Councils being in every respect identical with District Councils and wherever the words “District Council” or “District” appear they shall as regards Scotland be read as meaning “Area Council” or “Area”
- **“Enquiry”** means the enquiry carried out by the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Section G
- **“Hearing”** means any Hearing conducted by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission under Part II, Sections J or L
- **“Incapacity Procedure”** means the whole Procedure set out in Parts I and II hereof for dealing with cases of ministers falling within Part I, Paragraph 1 hereof
- **“Minister”** means a person whose name is on the Roll of Ministers and who is under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Minister’s Representative”** means any person appointed to represent a Minister in accordance with Part II, Paragraph A.7
- **“Notice of Appeal”** means a Notice of Appeal lodged by or on behalf of a Minister in accordance with Part II, Paragraph L.1.1
- **“Record of the Hearing”** means the Secretary’s Minute together with any verbatim record made and transcribed in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9
- **“Review Commission”** means a Commission consisting of five persons selected as described in Part II, Section D for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Roll of Ministers”** has the meaning given to it in Paragraph 1 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union
- **“Secretary of the Review Commission”** means the person appointed to act as the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph D.2
- **“Secretary’s Minute”** means the summary minute of the Hearing prepared by the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

- **"Standing Panel"** means the panel of persons constituted in accordance with Part II, Section C who will form part of each Review Commission
- **"Statement of Reasons"** means a statement appended to the Decision Record setting out the reasons for the Decision
- **"Structure"** means the Structure of the United Reformed Church
- **"Suspension" and "to Suspend"** shall have the meanings given to them in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union
- **"Synod"** means the Synod of which the Minister concerned is a member (unless such meaning is excluded by the context)

A.2 The Incapacity Procedure needs to move along in a timely manner so that feelings of frustration and unfairness do not arise as a result of unexplained delays and also so as to reduce the period of maximum stress for the Minister and all those involved. Yet, of equal importance, the issues have to be explored sensitively to enable wise and thoughtful decisions to be taken. Thus the Review Commission must at all times be mindful of the need to balance proper expedition on the one hand with the need to achieve natural justice both for the Minister and the whole Church and an outcome which is fair and properly considered.

A.3 Subject to the exception contained in Paragraph A.4 all statements, whether written or oral, made during and in the context of the Incapacity Procedure shall be regarded as being made in pursuance of that object and for no other reason and shall be treated as confidential within the framework of the Incapacity Procedure.

A.4 The Review Commission may, with the consent of the person or group making it, pass on any statement falling within Paragraph A.3 to any person or group within the Church, provided that the Review Commission satisfies itself that any statement so passed on will remain within the confidential forum of the recipient(s).

A.5 In any case where a person authorised or required to take some action regarding the appointment of persons to the Standing Panel or to any Review Commission or in the initiation of the consultation specified in Paragraph B.1 or as a member of the Consultation Group or in the subsequent issue of a Commencement Notice or some other administrative or procedural matter under the Incapacity Procedure is unable for any reason to do so, then, unless the Incapacity Procedure already makes specific provision for such a situation, that person's duly appointed deputy shall take such action in his/her place. This paragraph does not permit any member of a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission to appoint his/her own deputy.

A.6 In any case where the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary (in the case of appeals) is unable for any reason to carry out the duties of that office, his/her place shall be taken by a deputy duly authorised by or in the name of the General Assembly.

A.7.1 Any Minister coming within the Incapacity Procedure shall be entitled to appoint another person to act as the Minister's Representative* in receiving and responding to any forms, letters or other documents, in dealing with any other procedural matters and in attending any meeting or Hearing*, with or without the Minister.

A.7.2 In the case of any Minister who, by reason of his/her incapacity, may be incapable of understanding the implications of his/her involvement in the Incapacity Procedure or the nature and substance of the Commencement Notice*, or of dealing with any procedural issues or of taking any active part in any meetings or at any Hearings, the Review Commission, or the Appeals Review Commission, as the case may be, may, in response to an application made on the Minister's behalf, agree to the appointment of an appropriate person to act as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.

A.7.3 In the case of a Minister coming within Paragraph A.7.2 on whose behalf no such application is made under that Paragraph, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may invite APRC* to advise whether such an appointment would be appropriate in the Minister's best interests and, if so, to recommend a person for appointment and may thereupon appoint the person so recommended as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.

A.7.4 In the event that APRC, for whatever reason does not respond to the invitation contained in Paragraph A.7.3, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may, following consultation with the Moderator of the Synod*, itself appoint a person as the Minister's representative for the purposes of Paragraph A.7.1.

B. INITIATION OF THE INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

B.1. If at any time the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary believes that a particular Minister may be incapable of exercising (or of continuing to exercise) his/her Ministry on any of the grounds specified in Paragraph 1 of Part I, s/he shall consult with the other of them and with the Convener of APRC and those persons ("the Consultation Group*") shall together consider whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated.

B.2. As part of that consultation they must satisfy themselves as to the following matters:—

B.2.1 that all reasonable steps to rehabilitate the Minister have been made; and

B.2.2 that the procedures for ill health retirement do not apply or that there is no reasonable prospect of their implementation or of the resignation of the Minister; and

B.2.3 that, if APRC has already been involved, that Committee believes that it can do no more for the Minister; and

B.2.4 that no case against the Minister is already in progress under the Disciplinary Process.

B.3. If, having so consulted, the Consultation Group believes, unanimously or by a majority, that the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission* a Commencement Notice in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure, setting out the reasons for the issue of such notice and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken.

B.4. The Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing, and only so long as s/he forthwith invokes the consultation procedure set out in Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 above, suspend* the Minister with immediate effect, either orally or in writing. Suspension* imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister and written notice shall also be given to the Secretary of the District Council. In the event that the Consultation Group decides that a Commencement Notice should not be

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

issued, the suspension shall immediately be terminated and written confirmation thereof sent by the Moderator of the Synod or Deputy General Secretary as the case may be to the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council.

B.5. On the initiation of the Incapacity Procedure the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall put in train appropriate procedures to ensure pastoral care for the Minister, his/her family and the local church(es) involved.

B.6. Should the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary receive in accordance with the provisions applicable to the Disciplinary Process a recommendation falling within Paragraph 4 of Part I, s/he shall forthwith invoke the consultation procedure set out in Paragraph B.1 and B.2 and, unless the Consultation Group consider, either unanimously or by a majority, that there are compelling reasons to the contrary, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary who received the said recommendation shall forthwith initiate the Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Paragraph B.3 and shall attach to the Commencement Notice a copy of such recommendation. S/he shall send a copy of the Commencement Notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission* or the Appeals Commission* as the case may be to enable that commission to make a final order declaring the proceedings under the Disciplinary Process to be concluded.

C. STANDING PANEL

C.1 Appointment to the Standing Panel shall be by resolution of General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee, who shall in considering persons for appointment select one person from each of the following categories, namely (i) a former moderator of General Assembly (who shall also have the responsibility of consulting with the officers of the General Assembly for the purposes set out in Paragraph D.4.1), (ii) a Synod Moderator or a minister in local pastoral charge, (iii) a doctor with experience of general medical practice and (iv) a person with some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background (see also Paragraph D.6.1).

C.2 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph C.3, members of the Standing Panel shall be appointed for a term not exceeding five years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit with power to the General Assembly to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms not exceeding five years each.

C.3 When any member of the Standing Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Standing Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Review Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on a Review Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.

D. REVIEW COMMISSION

D.1 No person shall sit as a member of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission in the hearing of any case in which s/he has any involvement whether as a member of any local Church, District Council* or Synod connected with the case or whether on account of some personal or pastoral involvement as a result of which it is considered by the officers of General Assembly or by the proposed person him/herself that it would not be appropriate for him/her to take part in the hearing of the case.

D.2 A Secretary shall be appointed by resolution of General Assembly, on the advice of the Nominations Committee, to be responsible for all secretarial and procedural matters laid upon him/her by the Incapacity Procedure, including the servicing of the Review Commission, and the period and terms of office shall be such as General Assembly shall decide.

D.3 On receipt of a Commencement Notice, the Secretary shall forthwith take the following steps (marking every envelope containing papers despatched in connection with the Incapacity Procedure with the words 'Private and Confidential'):

D.3.1 Acknowledge receipt of such Notice and

D.3.2 Send to the Minister copies of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice giving the Minister the opportunity to submit a written response within a period of one month from the date of the Commencement Notice and

D.3.3 Send to each member of the Standing Panel a copy of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice drawing attention to Paragraph D.4 and requesting confirmation that the addressee is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Review Commission.

D.4.1 The member of the Standing Panel in the first category mentioned in Paragraph C.1 (or the member in the second, third or fourth categories (in that order) if the member(s) in the preceding category(ies) is/are unable to participate in the particular case) shall forthwith consult with the officers of General Assembly and jointly with them appoint as the fifth member of the Review Commission a person (not already a member of the Standing Panel) chosen on account of particular expertise or experience in the subject matter of the case, ascertaining through the procedures set out above that no conflict of interest or other reason would prevent such person from serving upon the Review Commission.

D.4.2 In the event that any member of the Standing Panel shall be unable to take part in the particular case, the Secretary shall invite the officers of General Assembly to appoint another person from the same category as specified in Paragraph C.1 as his/her replacement on the Review Commission.

D.5 When the identity of all five members of the Review Commission has been provisionally ascertained, the Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing thereof and invite him/her to state within 14 days of receipt of the Notice whether s/he has any objection to any of the persons serving upon the Review Commission and, if so, the grounds for such objection. Any such objection shall be considered by the officers of General Assembly, whose decision on whether to uphold or reject the objection shall be final.

D.6.1 The Review Commission shall appoint its own convener who shall be a member of the Church and who shall normally be the person appointed to the Standing Panel by virtue of his/her legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background under Paragraph C.1(iv).

D.6.2 The Convener of the Review Commission shall not have a casting vote, unless the Review Commission shall in circumstances arising under Paragraph D.7.1 consist of an even number of members.

D.7.1 In the event that any member of the Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.

D.7.2 Once a Review Commission has been duly constituted and has taken any steps to investigate the case, no person shall subsequently be appointed to serve on that Review Commission.

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

D.7.3 In the event that the Review Commission shall be reduced to fewer than three members at any time after it has taken any steps to investigate the case under the Incapacity Procedure, that Review Commission shall stand down and be discharged and a new Review Commission shall be appointed under this Section D which shall have access to all information (including documentation available to the former Review Commission).

D.7.4 If the Convener of the Review Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reason stated in Paragraph D.1, the remaining members shall appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.

E. SUSPENSION

E.1 If the Minister has already been suspended before the case has come into the Procedure, the Review Commission must, as soon as it has been constituted, decide whether the suspension should be continued or lifted, and inform all those concerned.

E.2. If the Minister has not already been suspended, the Review Commission may, either immediately upon its appointment or at any time during the continuance of the case, resolve that the Minister be suspended.

E.3 Any suspension, whenever imposed, may be lifted by the Review Commission at any time during the continuance of the case.

E.4 Any decision made by the Review Commission under Paragraph E.1, E.2 or E.3 shall immediately be notified in writing by the Secretary of the Review Commission to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice under Paragraph B.3).

E.5 An existing suspension continued under Paragraph E.1 or a new suspension under Paragraph E.2 shall remain in force until either:—

E.5.1 the Review Commission makes a subsequent decision relative to that suspension or

E.5.2 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.2 that the name of the Minister be retained on the Roll of Ministers*, in which case the suspension automatically ceases on the date upon which that decision is formally notified to the Minister or

E.5.3 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.3 that the name of the Minister be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, there being no appeal within the period allowed, in which case the suspension shall continue up to the date of deletion (i.e. the date of expiry of such period under Paragraph K.4.3) or

E.5.4 there is an appeal against the decision of the Review Commission, in which case the suspension shall continue throughout the appeal proceedings and automatically cease on the date of the formal notification of the Appeals Review Commission's decision to the Minister (whether this be that his/her name be retained on or deleted from the Roll of Ministers, in the latter case the termination of the suspension coinciding with the deletion).

E.6 For the avoidance of doubt, in the case of a suspension first imposed under the Disciplinary Process upon a Minister who then enters the Incapacity Procedure through the issue of a Commencement Notice, the provisions of the Incapacity Procedure, and not those of the Disciplinary Process, shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension. Conversely, in the case of a suspension first imposed hereunder upon a Minister who then enters the Disciplinary Process as a result of the steps set out in Section H, the provisions of that Process shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension.

F. INITIAL REVIEW

F.1 The members of the Review Commission shall consult together as soon as possible to consider the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their enquiry* should take (as to which, see Section G below).

F.2 At the outset the Review Commission will need to address the following questions:

F.2.1 Have all the steps outlined at Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 been taken?

F.2.2 How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the enquiry?

F.2.3 Should an early meeting with the Minister be sought or should this be deferred pending further enquiry?

F.2.4 Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission?

F.2.5 Are there any special factors in the particular case which should be taken into account at this stage? This is particularly relevant in cases coming into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.

F.3 Having carried out its initial review and agreed on its modus operandi, the Review Commission will move into the enquiry stage of its proceedings.

G. CONDUCT OF ENQUIRY

G.1 The Review Commission shall have control of all procedural matters, including the gathering of information and any issues relating to the Minister's suspension. The Review Commission shall also have discretion as regards the extent to which written statements, reports, videos, recorded interviews and other recordings and transcripts may be taken into account.

G.2 The members of the Review Commission will need to pay constant attention to all the issues referred to in Paragraph F.2 and any other factors present throughout the whole progress of the case.

G.3 Where cases come into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, information may already have been considered within that Process. However, the Review Commission must always carry out its own enquiry and cannot rely upon such information simply because it was presented and considered within the Disciplinary Process.

G.4 In the light of Paragraph 1 of Part I the Review Commission should, as early as possible in its investigation and wherever possible or practicable, take the following steps:

G.4.1 meet with the Minister or, if circumstances render this impossible or impracticable, with the Minister's representative, either or whom may, if s/he wishes, have a friend present with him/her and

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

G.4.2 seek the written permission of the Minister or his/her representative (but only so far as the latter has the authority in law to grant such permission on behalf of the Minister) to apply for copies of all the Minister's medical notes, records and reports from his/her General Practitioner and copies of the reports from any specialist who may have examined or been consulted by the Minister.

G.5 If the Review Commission is unable to follow the steps outlined in Paragraph G.4 in any given case, it will need to consider the underlying reasons very carefully and be prepared to proceed with its enquiry in the light of the best information available.

G.6 As envisaged in Paragraph F.2.2, the Review Commission may also meet with other persons during the course of its enquiry and should inform each such person that s/he may be called later to give evidence and answer questions at a Hearing with the Minister present. If any such person refuses or expresses an unwillingness to attend any Hearing in person, the Review Commission may invoke the provisions of Paragraph G.1.

G.7 The Review Commission shall be entitled to call for and consider all minutes of meetings, correspondence, notes, reports and documents which it considers appropriate to its enquiry. This provision shall not apply where those from whom such documentation is requested can show that it is protected by confidentiality, but instead they would be asked to supply a written report which would also be available to the Minister.

H. RECOMMENDATION FOR REFERRAL TO THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

H.1.1 If it considers that, in a case within the Incapacity Procedure, an issue of discipline is or may be involved, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission, may, at any time during the proceedings and whether or not a Hearing has yet taken place, refer the case back to the person who initiated it in accordance with Paragraph B.3 with the recommendation that the Disciplinary Procedure should be commenced in respect of the Minister, whereupon the proceedings under the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of that recommendation.

H.1.2 In such a situation, the Secretary of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be shall forthwith send or deliver to the person who initiated the case a written notice containing such recommendation, signed by the Convener and incorporating a statement of the reasons on which the recommendation is based, in summary form if the Commission so decides, together with such other documentation (if any) as the Commission authorises the Secretary to release.

H.1.3 That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned to await the recipient's response and shall also state the time, which shall be not longer than one month, within which the recipient must notify the Secretary in writing whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected.

H.2.1 The Secretary shall at the same time send a copy of the said Notice to the Minister. It is assumed that the Minister will already have copies of all the accompanying documents mentioned in Paragraph H.1.2, but, if there are any which s/he has yet not seen, copies of these must also be sent to him/her.

H.2.2 The Secretary shall at the same time send copies of the said Notice (but not the accompanying documentation) to the General Secretary, the Secretary of the District Council and the Moderator of the Synod (in any case where s/he is not already the recipient of the Notice under Paragraph H.1.1).

H.3.1 If written confirmation is received from the recipient of the Notice, countersigned by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, that the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted and that a Referral Notice has been issued under the

Disciplinary Process in respect of the Minister, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be shall declare the case within the Incapacity Procedure to be concluded and no further action shall be taken in respect thereof. The Secretary shall give written notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.2.2.

H.3.2 If written notification is received from the recipient of the Notice that the aforesaid recommendation has been rejected, the case shall forthwith be resumed within the Incapacity Procedure. The Secretary shall give notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.2.2.

H.4 No recommendation for referral to the Disciplinary Process shall be made in any case which comes within the Incapacity Procedure as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.

H.5 As to the position regarding the suspension of a Minister to whom this Section H applies, see Paragraph E.5.5.

For the avoidance of confusion, there is no Section I.

J. HEARINGS

J.1 The Review Commission shall decide when it is appropriate for a Hearing to take place and whom it requires to attend, whereupon the Secretary shall consult with the Convener, the other members of the Review Commission, the Minister and any other such persons as might be required to attend as to the venue, date and time for the Hearing and, when these are fixed, shall give written notification thereof to all concerned with the request that they confirm their intention to attend and, in the case of the Minister, state whether it is his/her intention to have a person to accompany him/her.

J.2 The Hearing shall be conducted in private and only the following persons shall be permitted to attend:

- The members of the Review Commission
- The Secretary or a duly appointed Deputy
- The Minister
- A person chosen by the Minister to accompany him/her
- Any medical, specialist, expert or other witnesses, but only while giving evidence, unless the Review Commission otherwise directs
- A representative of the Church's Legal Advisers, if requested to attend by the Review Commission.
- Any person responsible for operating the recording equipment or otherwise preparing a verbatim report of the proceedings referred to in Paragraph J.9.

J.3 Subject to ensuring that the rules of natural justice are observed, the Convener should ensure that the proceedings are as relaxed and informal as possible.

J.4 All witnesses called by the Review Commission to give evidence shall be subject to questioning by the Convener (and by other members of the Review Commission with the Convener's permission). The Minister shall be entitled to ask questions of such witnesses.

J.5 When the process described in Paragraph J.4 has been completed, the Minister or his/her representative may invite witnesses called by him/her to give evidence and may question them, as may the Convener and other members of the Review Commission with the Convener's permission.

J.6 When all the witnesses have given evidence, the Minister or the Minister's representative may if s/he wishes address the Review Commission.

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

J.7 In the special circumstances of any case the Convener may, if s/he considers it appropriate and helpful, vary any of the above procedures at his/her discretion.

J.8 In considering the evidence and information before it, the Review Commission shall apply a standard of proof on the balance of probability.

J.9 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing ('the Secretary's Minute*'). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording, or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener. The Record of the Hearing* shall consist of the Secretary's Minute together with any such verbatim record, which shall be transcribed in the event of an appeal.

J.10 At the conclusion of the Hearing the members of the Review Commission will wish to deliberate upon their final decision, together with any guidance and/or recommendation(s) which they may wish to append to their decision. The Convener will inform those present that the decision will not be made that day but that written notification of the decision will be given within ten days to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.2.1). The Hearing is thus concluded.

K. REVIEW COMMISSION'S DECISION AND ITS NOTIFICATION

K.1 Following the conclusion of the Hearing, the Review Commission shall, all meeting and deliberating together, but in the absence of the Minister and all other persons, consider all the information concerning the Minister which has been before them during the case for the purpose of reaching a decision in accordance with Paragraph K.2. In particular they must make a careful and detailed appraisal of all of the following:

K.1.1 the circumstances which have led up to the commencement of the case as indicated in the Commencement Notice and

K.1.2 any expert opinion of a medical, psychological or similar or related nature in respect of the Minister which has been sought by the Review Commission or which has in any way been presented to it during the case and

K.1.3 information supplied by the Minister and others within the Procedure, whether or not on the Minister's behalf and

K.1.4 reports and other documentation requested by the Review Commission from other persons or bodies within or outside the Church with whom the Minister, through the exercise of his/her ministry, might have had a particular involvement, such as ecumenical posts, chaplaincies or positions within public bodies and

K.1.5 all other factors properly coming within the scope of the review being undertaken by the Review Commission and

K.1.6 the weight to be attached to each of the factors in the case as indicated above, bearing in mind the manner in which the information was provided and, where appropriate, whether the Minister or his/her representative had the opportunity of challenging or commenting upon it.

K.2 The purpose of the deliberation referred to in Paragraph K.1 is to enable the Review Commission to reach (either unanimously or by a majority) a decision in accordance with Part 1 Paragraph 5 as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.

K.3 The Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record*) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and shall append a statement of its reasons (the Statement of Reasons*) for the decision, but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.

K.4.1 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2 and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph K.4.2 or Paragraph K.4.3, whichever is applicable.

K.4.2 If the Review Commission/Appeals Review Commission decides to retain the Minister's name on the Roll of Ministers, his/her status is unchanged.

K.4.3 If the Review Commission decides to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, no appeal having been lodged by or on behalf of the Minister within the period specified in the notification referred to in Paragraph K.8.1, deletion shall take effect on the date of expiry of such period.

K.5 Every decision reached under the Procedure (whether or not on appeal) is made in the name of the General Assembly and is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.

K.6 Within ten days of the date of the Review Commission's decision the Secretary shall send or deliver written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Minister or his/her representative.

K.7 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be retained on the Roll of Ministers, the Secretary shall at the same time send or deliver copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.

K.8 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, then:

K.8.1 The written notification shall draw the Minister's attention to his/her right of appeal and specify the precise date by which notice of appeal must be lodged by the Minister with the Secretary.

K.8.2 The Secretary shall, at the same time as taking the action required under Paragraph K.6, send to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee a Notice to the effect that a decision has been made by the Review Commission that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers. Such Notice shall not contain any further information other than that the decision is still subject to appeal and that a further Notice will be sent when it is known whether there is to be an appeal or not.

K.8.3 If by the date specified in the written notification to the Minister under Paragraph K.6 as the final date for the lodging of an appeal no appeal has been lodged by the Minister, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall send copies of the Decision Record to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.

K.8.4 If the Minister lodges a Notice of Appeal*, the procedure set out in Section L applies.

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

L. APPEALS PROCEDURE

L.1.1 Should the Minister wish to appeal against the decision of the Review Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers, s/he or his/her representative must lodge written notice of such Appeal with the Secretary of the Review Commission within 21 days of receipt by the Minister of the written notification of the decision under Paragraph K.6 (which shall set out the grounds of the appeal either in detail or in summary form as the Minister chooses).

L.1.2 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith notify the General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged, at the same time passing on to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal together with the body of papers laid before the Review Commission in hearing the case and the Record of the Hearing as defined in Paragraph J.9. The General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial and administrative capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.

L.1.3 At the same time the Secretary of the Review Commission shall also notify the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.3) that the Minister has lodged an Appeal against the decision of the Review Commission.

L.1.4 A Notice of Appeal which is outside the time limit specified in Paragraph L.1.1 will not normally be accepted. The General Secretary may, however, at his/her discretion accept a Notice of Appeal out of time, but only if s/he is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which would justify the exercise of discretion by the General Secretary to allow the appeal out of time.

L.1.5 The Rules set out in this Part II as applicable to the Review Commission shall also apply to the Appeals Review Commission (with the necessary changes), except for those which by their context are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure.

L.1.6 No-one apart from the Minister shall have a right of appeal against a decision of the Review Commission.

L.2 On receipt of the Notice of Appeal lodged under Paragraph L.1, the General Secretary shall as soon as possible acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Appeal and send to the Minister a copy of the Record of the Hearing before the Review Commission (see Paragraph J.9).

L.3.1 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within 14 days of receipt by the General Secretary of the Notice of Appeal under Paragraph L.1.2 (or within such further time as they may reasonably require) appoint the Appeals Review Commission, which shall consist of three persons, in accordance with Paragraphs L.3.2 and L.3.3.

L.3.2 The three persons to be so appointed shall be (i) a person with some legal, tribunal or other professional experience or other similar background (being a member of the United Reformed Church but not necessarily a member of General Assembly), who shall normally act as Convener of the Appeals Review Commission, (ii) a former Moderator of the General Assembly and (iii) either a person with general medical experience or one with professional expertise in the condition(s) giving rise to the subject matter of the case (such person not necessarily being a member of the Church).

L.3.3 In the event that for any reason it is inappropriate for the person in the first category specified in Paragraph L.3.2 to be the Convener of the Appeals review Commission, the convenership shall be assumed by the person in the second category thereof.

L.3.4 Persons appointed to an Appeals Review Commission are subject to Paragraph D.1.

L.4.1 The General Secretary shall send or deliver to each of the proposed appointees a written invitation to serve on the Appeals Review Commission for the hearing of the Appeal, naming the Minister concerned but supplying no further information about the case.

L.4.2 The invitation shall draw the attention of each proposed appointee to Paragraph D.1 and shall request confirmation that s/he is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Appeals Review Commission.

L.4.3 The Invitee shall within seven days of receipt of the invitation to serve notify the General Secretary in writing whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so confirming compliance with Paragraph L.4.1.

L.5.1 The General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing of the names, addresses and credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraph D.1 and pointing out that any objection to any of the proposed appointees must be made to the General Secretary in writing within fourteen days, setting out the grounds of such objection.

L.5.2 To ensure that the appeals process moves along in a timely manner, any such objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.

L.5.3 The officers of the General Assembly shall consider every objection properly notified and shall decide whether to uphold or reject it.

L.5.4 If they reject the objection, the General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative.

L.5.5 If they uphold the objection, the General Secretary shall give written notification thereof to the Minister or the Minister's representative and to the person to whom the objection has been taken and the above procedure shall be repeated as often as is necessary to complete the appointment of the Appeals Review Commission.

L.6.1 In the event that any member of the Appeals Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Appeals Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of two members, in which event, but not otherwise, the Convener shall have a casting vote.

L.6.2 In the event that, for the reasons stated in Paragraph L.6.1 the Appeals Review Commission shall consist of fewer than two members at any time after that Commission has taken any steps in connection with the Appeal, the Appeals Review Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Appeals Review Commission shall be appointed in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Section L to hear the Appeal.

L.6.3 Once the Appeals Review Commission has been validly constituted and has taken any steps in accordance with this Section L, no person shall be subsequently appointed to serve on that Appeals Review Commission.

L.7 Each member of the Appeals Review Commission when appointed shall receive from the General Secretary copies of the following:

L.7.1 The Decision Record and

L.7.2 The Statement of Reasons and

L.7.3 The Notice of Appeal, setting out the grounds of the appeal and

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

L.7.4 The body of papers considered by the Review Commission

L.7.5 The Record of the Hearing

L.8 The members of the Appeals Review Commission, when constituted, shall consult together as soon as possible to review the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their conduct of the appeal shall take, following the procedures set out in Sections F, G and H (if they deem the latter appropriate). In addition, they may, if the circumstances so require, consider any of the following, particularly if any such issues are raised in the Notice of Appeal:

L.8.1 Whether there is or may be new information which has come to light and which could not have reasonably been available to the Review Commission before it made its decision under Section K.

L.8.2 Whether any such new information would in its opinion have been material in that, had it been tested and proved to the satisfaction of the Review Commission, it might have caused it to reach a different decision.

L.8.3 Whether there may have been some procedural irregularity or breach of the rules of natural justice or serious misunderstanding by the Review Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Procedure itself.

L.9.1 Before reaching its decision on the Appeal, there shall be a Hearing before the Appeals Review Commission which the Minister shall normally be expected to attend.

L.9.2 The General Secretary shall consult with the Convener and the other members of the Appeals Review Commission and, where possible, with the Minister or his/her representative as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, shall decide thereupon and shall notify all concerned in writing of the arrangements for the Hearing.

L.9.3 The General Secretary shall (unless excluded for the reasons specified in Paragraph D.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Appeals Review Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing. S/he shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

L.9.4 If the General Secretary cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Appeals Review Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph D.1. Such person will carry out the duties set out in Paragraph L.9.3 but shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.

L.9.5 The General Secretary or his/her deputy appointed under Paragraph L.9.4 shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Appeals Review Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record.

L.9.6 A representative of the Church's legal advisers may, at the invitation of the Appeals Review Commission, attend the Hearing in order to advise it on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Appeals Review Commission, nor shall s/he be present when it deliberates and decides upon the case.

L.9.7 The conduct of the Hearing of the Appeal is in the hands of the Appeals Review Commission whose Convener will at the outset of the Hearing read out the decision of the Review Commission.

L.9.8 At some point during the Hearing the Convener will invite the Minister or his/her representative to address the Appeals Review Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.

L.10.1 The members of the Appeals Review Commission shall at the conclusion of the Hearing, all meeting and deliberating together but in the absence of the Minister and all other persons consider and arrive at their decision in accordance with Paragraph L.10.2. In so doing they are required to make a careful and detailed appraisal of all the factors set out at Paragraphs K.1.1 to K.1.6 and of all the information, reports, representations and other factors forming the subject matter of the appeal

L.10.2 The purpose of their deliberation is to enable them to reach (either unanimously or by a majority vote) a decision in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Part I of the Procedure as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto, the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.

L.10.3 There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Appeals Review Commission which is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.

L.11.1 The Appeals Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and whether its decision upholds or reverses the decision of the Review Commission and shall append a statement of its reasons for the decision (the Statement of Reasons), but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.

L.11.2 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Appeals Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2.

L.11.3 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, such deletion takes effect with immediate effect.

L.12 Within ten days of the date of the Appeals Review Commission's decision the General Secretary shall:

L.12.1 Send or deliver written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Minister or his/her representative and

L.12.2 Send or deliver copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.

M. FORMS, SENDING/DELIVERY OF DOCUMENTS and MISCELLANEOUS

M.1 Model forms have been prepared to assist those concerned with the Procedure. The forms may be amended from time to time and new forms introduced. Use of the model forms is not compulsory and minor variations in the wording will not invalidate them, but it is strongly recommended that the model forms be used and followed as closely as possible to avoid confusion and to ensure that all relevant information is supplied at the proper time.

Ministerial Incapacity Procedure Part II

M.2 Any form, letter or other document required to be sent or delivered to a person under the Procedure shall be assumed to have been received by that person if sent or delivered in any of the following ways:

M.2.1 By delivering the same personally to the person concerned or

M.2.2 By delivering the same or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the last known address of the person concerned in a sealed envelope addressed to that person or

M.2.3 In such other manner as the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission (in the latter case if the sending or delivery relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.

M.3 Any form, letter or document required to be sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission or on the General Secretary (in the case of an appeal) shall be delivered or sent by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be at the address given in the current issue of the Year Book or subsequently notified or (in the absence of any such address in the Year Book) in an envelope addressed to that person at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT and marked "Ministerial Incapacity Process".

M.4 All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope clearly addressed to the addressee and marked "Private and Confidential".

M.5 Where any form, letter or other document is sent by first class pre-paid post, it shall be assumed to have been received by the recipient on the third day after the posting of the same.

M.6 Where any issue or question of procedure arises whilst the matter is under the jurisdiction of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission, that Commission shall resolve each such issue or question or give such directions as shall appear to it to be just and appropriate in the circumstances.

M.7 Deletion as a result of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall have the effect of terminating any contract, written or oral, between the Minister and the United Reformed Church or any constituent part thereof in relation to his/her ministry.

N. REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY, COSTS AND RETENTION OF RECORDS AND PAPERS

N.1 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly all decisions reached by the Review Commission and the Appeals Review Commission in the following manner:

N.1.1 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete the name of a Minister from the Roll of Ministers is subject to appeal, the Report shall simply state that a decision has been reached in a case which is subject to appeal and shall not name the Minister.

N.1.2 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete is not subject to appeal, the Report shall so state.

N.1.3 If a report has already been made to the General Assembly under Paragraph N.1.1 and the Appeals Review Commission reverses the decision of the Review Commission and allows the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers, the General Secretary shall report the decision of the Appeals Review Commission to the next meeting of the General Assembly without naming the Minister.

N.2 The cost of operating the Procedure and the reasonable and proper expenses of persons attending a Hearing and the costs of any reports obtained by or on the authority of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of the Procedure (but excluding any costs of representation) shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.

N.3 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall be responsible for the keeping of the record of decisions taken by the Review Commission and by the Appeals Review Commission, and for the custody of all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.

A handwritten signature, possibly 'G', is written in cursive script.

Consensus Decision Making for

the United Reformed Church

General Assembly 2007

Consensus Decision Making

RESOLUTION 50

- 1) General Assembly resolves that:
 - a) from the close of Assembly 2007 it shall adopt a system of decision making by consensus in addition to the process of making decisions by majority voting.
 - b) all discussions and decisions will begin by using consensus procedures except the election of the Moderator of the General Assembly and matters covered by section 3(1) & (2) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church which will be dealt with by majority voting.
- 2) General Assembly resolves to amend the Standing Orders of the General Assembly by adding a new section 2 (pages 5-8 below) and renumbering the current sections 2 to 12 as 3 to 13.
- 3) Since the rules of procedure 1.3 state that "standing orders ... shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of synods ... and their committees", General Assembly encourages Mission Council, Assembly Committees, Synods and their committees to use the consensus procedures.

This paper has been prepared on behalf of Mission Council by Martin Hazell, Andrew Littlejohns, Lindsey Sanderson and Elizabeth Nash.

It was extremely valuable that we were guided, supported, trained and encouraged by Jill Tabart from the Uniting Church in Australia who came to England at the invitation of Thames North Synod in November 2006.

Gathering God,
you shelter us under your wing like a hen with her chicks;
and then encourage us to reach out in new and exciting ways.
But we long for what we know,
for what we have always done.
Be with us as we listen for your voice through others' insights
and discern where you want us to go,
what you want us to do
and what you want us to be.

Sometimes we fail to hear what others with less confidence have to say;
sometimes we are so used to making decisions that we ignore and
unknowingly trample on other people's feelings and views.

Help us to listen...
to others...
to you...
and to our heart's desires...

Help us to understand that majorities are not always right,
one person alone can throw new light on old problems,
the most eloquent speeches sometimes hide your truth,
committees can close down discussion rather than open it up to your Spirit.

Forgive us those times when we have pushed our own personal views,
have failed to listen to others and have perhaps influenced a meeting to
achieve earthquake or fire for our own ends.

Help us to appreciate that
you may not be in the wind,
but in that small voice whispering in our ear
the way you wish us to go...

1. Introduction

1.1 Consensus decision making is a process of listening for God's word to us through the prayerful engagement of all who are making the decision. It requires careful and skilful moderating as the council seeks to discern the will of God through everyone involved being heard and discovering an agreed outcome. Although there is room for disagreement, the process encourages the whole meeting to 'come to a mind'. While vigorous debate is expected, the process seeks not to be confrontational but rather, in love, to cherish views from across the range of possibilities and patiently to work through the issues until a solution is found.

'Let Christ's peace be arbiter in your decisions, the peace to which you are called as members of a single body'

Colossians 3:15

2. The Roots of Consensus

2.1 The responsibility that each Council of the United Reformed Church exercises is 'under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit.' (*The Manual, The Structure of the United Reformed Church 1.(3)*) Both this Conciliar model and a process of making decisions by consensus find their origins in the practice of the early church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters to the first Christian communities.

2.2 In Acts 2 the early Christian community is epitomised by the sharing of meals and possessions, in caring for one another and expressing joy as they worshipped together and welcomed newcomers. For that community and for the church today,

Consensus Decision Making for the United Reformed Church

the image of the body is important. 1 Corinthians 12:1-27 reminds us that each person's gifts need to be valued and that each person's contribution is necessary if the whole body, with Christ as its head, is to live the fullness of life; whilst Philippians 2:5-8 reminds us to act in humility, as is Christ's nature, and acknowledge our own vulnerability and weakness. On four occasions in the Acts of the Apostles we find a record of a communal decision making process. By looking at the issues addressed (appointing a replacement for Judas 1:14-26; the distribution to the Greek speaking widows 6:1-7; gentile acceptance 11:1-18; circumcision 15:1-33) we begin to see a pattern emerging of how the process was carried out.

- There was reliance on prayer and scripture and the memory of being with Jesus. (Acts 1:23-26)
- There was an over-riding sense of purpose in being followers of Jesus. (Acts 6:1-7)
- There was an openness to the guiding of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15-18) and throughout the whole process there was the desire to discern God's will (Acts 15:28).

2.3 As the church grew in number and maturity throughout the first century, often having to embrace situations as complex as any the church struggles with today, it sought to model itself around Paul's injunction to the church at Philippi

'If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any consolation of love, any participation in the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another and a common attitude of mind. Leave no room for selfish ambition and vanity, but humbly reckon others better than yourselves. Look to each other's interests and not merely to your own.'

Philippians 2:1-4

2.4 The United Reformed Church believes that in the Councils of the Church we hear the voice of God mediated through human voices. By encouraging community, praying together, listening to one another in a spirit of openness and humility and sharing what is on our hearts and minds we discern most acutely the leading of God.

3. Why change the way we make decisions?

3.1 As a church we have always sought to work towards God's will and plan for us. It has been our tradition and understanding that each council of the Church 'comes to a mind' over a matter. The ideal is that the council reaches a unanimous agreement even if in the end we have to do this by taking a vote. However this ideal has not always been achieved in our present process of making decisions.

By encouraging community, praying together

3.2 Being a community of individuals means that there will always be differences in our interpretation of God's plan. In the traditional approach this is resolved by pitting opposing viewpoints against each other. It is an adversarial setting. It encourages the taking of one viewpoint or the other when speaking. Often people stick ever more rigidly to the viewpoint they originally took. Changing one's viewpoint implies that someone has 'lost' and another 'won'. Pride can get in the way of the process of discerning God's will. Recently the United Reformed Church has recognised some of these difficulties and introduced an 'alternative motions' procedure.

3.3 Consensus decision making is significantly different and places the emphasis on listening to one another as we seek God's will. It places equal validity on all insights and input. People still share their insights but without the confrontational atmosphere. This means that those who are not as adept at debating in the traditional sense, can contribute without fear of being outspoken by those more experienced in meeting procedure. Changing one's mind after listening to various opinions and insights is not a source of embarrassment it is more a mutual eagerness to discover an appropriate way forward for the church. Participation through small groups and through the use of

indicator cards can be quite liberating for some people, particularly those who in the past may have found it difficult to feel they have been included or have their voice heard or respected. Above all, listening to one another is the heart of consensus.

4. How to move to a consensus process

4.1 The first step in developing consensus is to build the community in each council or meeting. Christian communities develop when members of a group share the life they have in Christ. It is strengthened as members are open to each other's insights and feelings in pursuit of the ideals and practices around which the community is formed. The ideal of community we seek to achieve in the Church finds its fulfilment in the relationships expressed in the Trinity where love binds Father, Son and Holy Spirit together.

By...
listening to
one another in
a spirit
of openness
and humility

4.2 Then the United Reformed Church will be required to be much more open than we are now, to accept leadership and to be prepared to venture along a pilgrimage without knowing or prejudging the outcome. Often the way forward on an issue develops as the process unfolds, such that the outcome is quite different from any of the possibilities first envisaged. Openness to the Spirit's guidance is an exciting journey of anticipation!

4.3 Being 'open' means all members are expected to contribute to the process, hearing dissenting voices without ill feeling or a need to attack the other person, building on earlier insights as discussion proceeds, always searching for the way forward that heeds the insights being shared. All views are honoured. It enables new and different ideas and solutions to be found, which had not been previously thought of.

4.4 There will need to be neutral (unbiased) leadership from the Moderator. It will be important for the Moderator to be trained properly, as well as being given regular and appropriate feedback. In meetings the Moderator can be given support through a facilitation group, which will offer guidance and suggestions for different ways forward as well as enabling and reporting on group discussions. If possible meetings may take place in a context where people can sit around tables so that a move to group discussion is simple and easy.

4.5 Assembly Committees will be encouraged to use consensus procedures in their own meetings so that what they bring to Assembly will already have been through a careful and prayerful listening process. What is offered to the Assembly from a committee will be designed to ensure the Assembly is well-resourced to engage in discerning the way forward on any matter.

4.6 It's important to realise that a consensus outcome may be agreement on the process for handling an issue, rather than a definitive decision to support or reject particular words. It may offer the opportunity to explore the principles behind what we believe by allowing us to open them up to discussion. It may be that more work or further consultation is required, before it is clear what the church needs to be saying on an issue.

4.7 Consensus is a process of pilgrimage. It is not always possible to come to a mind at a particular time. The Church may have to be willing to accept that some decisions take more time and we must be prepared to allow that to happen – the item may need to be re-visited at a later meeting. It should also be accepted that some decisions need constant review because contexts, in which those decisions have been made, change.

Consensus
is a
process of
pilgrimage

4.8 This document is a beginning. There will, no doubt, be many changes and refinements ahead for us as we work and listen together in consensus.

Resources

- 1) *A Manual for Meetings 2000* The Uniting Church in Australia ISBN 1 86407 223 7
- 2) *Coming to Consensus* by Jill Tabart WCC 2003 ISBN 2-8254-1392-5

Consensus Procedures for the Councils of the United Reformed Church

The purpose of council meetings of the United Reformed Church include:

- worshipping, sharing, learning and building community together.
- sharing in formal occasions and welcoming visitors.
- overseeing the life and work of the church by
 - ◆ receiving the reports of committees and people who are accountable to the council.
 - ◆ taking decisions concerning the life and work of the United Reformed Church such as
 - deciding priorities
 - planning work to be done, changed or not done,
 - considering issues and channelling them to the other councils of the church,
 - ◆ being responsible for the financial and trust life of the church.

Further details of the functions of the councils of the church are found in the Manual.

The process of consensus:

Consensus means a decision of the council reached unanimously, or where a small minority of members of the council is willing to accept a proposal that is not their first preference.

Agreement means a decision of the council where, after careful consideration of the options, a small number is unable to accept the majority opinion but agree to stand aside so that the matter may be resolved.

- 1) At each stage of the process the moderator will **clarify the nature of the session**, that is whether it is for information, discussion or decision making.
- 2) **Worship** is a vital element in the meeting of every council of the church.
- 3) **Community building** is important to help the process of consensus to work.
- 4) **General Sessions** include ceremonial occasions, formal addresses and opening and closing ceremonies etc.
- 5) **The Information Session:**
This session aims to inform the council on the issue to be considered. A range of options may be presented to the council by different people who can speak in favour of their option. Those presenting issues, reports or proposals may speak for no more than five minutes unless the council agrees to an extension of time. Members of the council are then free to ask questions on the issue or seek for clarification or further information.
- 6) **The Discussion Session:**
This is the opportunity for discussion of various viewpoints and vigorous debate on different opinions. Speakers may speak for no more than three minutes. All those present may contribute.
- 7) The methods used may include prayer, buzz groups, group discussions, speeches to the whole council, time for thinking during a break etc. The use of coloured cards is very helpful at this stage. In particular the moderator should ensure that those who have different backgrounds or who disagree or who are unsure are given space to contribute to the debate, as well as those who are enthusiastic.

Consensus Decision Making for the United Reformed Church

- 8) The quality of discussion is significantly improved if the council meets around tables so that small group discussion can happen quickly and easily.
- 9) As the discussion session proceeds possible ways forward for the church are developed until a specific proposal is reached.
- 10) **The Decision Session:**
Only those council members present may contribute to this session, they may speak for no more than three minutes.
- 11) Discussion continues with speakers contributing to the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. At all times, speakers are encouraged to suggest a way forward for the council, rather than merely speaking with passion for a pre-determined view. Minor changes of wording can be agreed as the discussion proceeds. It is important to hear from those indicating disquiet or disapproval as well as those who are enthusiastic.
- 12) The proposal should be displayed throughout the discussion in such a way that all can see the text and any progressively agreed changes to it.
- 13) If there is a major new insight expressed, then it may be appropriate to move back into a discussion session.
- 14) After summing up where the assembly seems to be heading, the moderator checks whether the assembly is nearing consensus using one or more questions such as the following:

What is your response to this proposal? (inviting a show of indicator cards)

 - i) Do you believe we have **consensus** in support of this proposal?
 - ii) Do you believe we have **consensus** not to support this proposal?
 - iii) If there is strong but not unanimous support:
 - 1) Who supports the proposal?
 - 2) Who does not support the proposal as your first option, but is prepared to accept it? Are you prepared to have the issue declared resolved by **consensus**?
 - 3) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?
 - a) After further discussion accept that they have been heard and agree to live with the outcome. Are you prepared to have the issue declared resolved by **agreement**? If so they may choose to record their dissent.
 - 4) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal? Look for **further possibilities** including:
 - i) adjourning the discussion to another time or place perhaps with more work before reconsideration
 - ii) ask the Moderator to continue to work on the issue with relevant people until the next Assembly
 - iii) refer the issue to another council or group to deal with
 - iv) decide the issue is unnecessary/inappropriate to continue dealing with
 - v) declare that there are diverse views which Christians may hold with equal integrity.
 - 5) Only if the issue is urgent move to **majority decision**.

The Moderator

The role of the moderator is very important.

The Moderator:

- assists the assembly to discern the will of God as far as possible
- is alert to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as members contribute
- pauses for prayer or buzz group reflection as appropriate
- encourages trust and integrity in contributions
- ensures care and support for those whose honesty or minority voice makes them vulnerable
- invites members to respond to speeches showing indicator cards, and reflects the mood of the meeting as it becomes apparent
- suggests or encourages creative modifications of a proposal, picking up insights expressed
- summarises discussion from time to time to assist in focusing the discussion.

The Council and Moderator may be assisted by a **facilitation group**. This will be appointed at the beginning of each Assembly by the Assembly. It will:

- enable group work, collate responses from groups and report back to the council
- help and support the Moderator
- be responsible for the display of the text under discussion.

Coloured Cards

Coloured cards are not essential in consensus decision making – but they are helpful.

Each member is given two cards:

1. Orange – held at the end of a speech and so that the Moderator can see, indicates warmth towards a point of view, or approval of a proposal.
2. Blue – held at the end of a speech and so that the Moderator can see, indicates coolness about what has been heard or disapproval of a proposal.
3. Cards held crossed indicate to the Moderator it's time to move on to the next subject.

Cards should be shown when the Moderator asks for them and so that the Moderator can see them. They indicate response to what has just been said. They help the Moderator to gauge the strength of feeling for various ideas, and to invite speeches from those who are unsure or cool towards the proposal.

Changes of Order

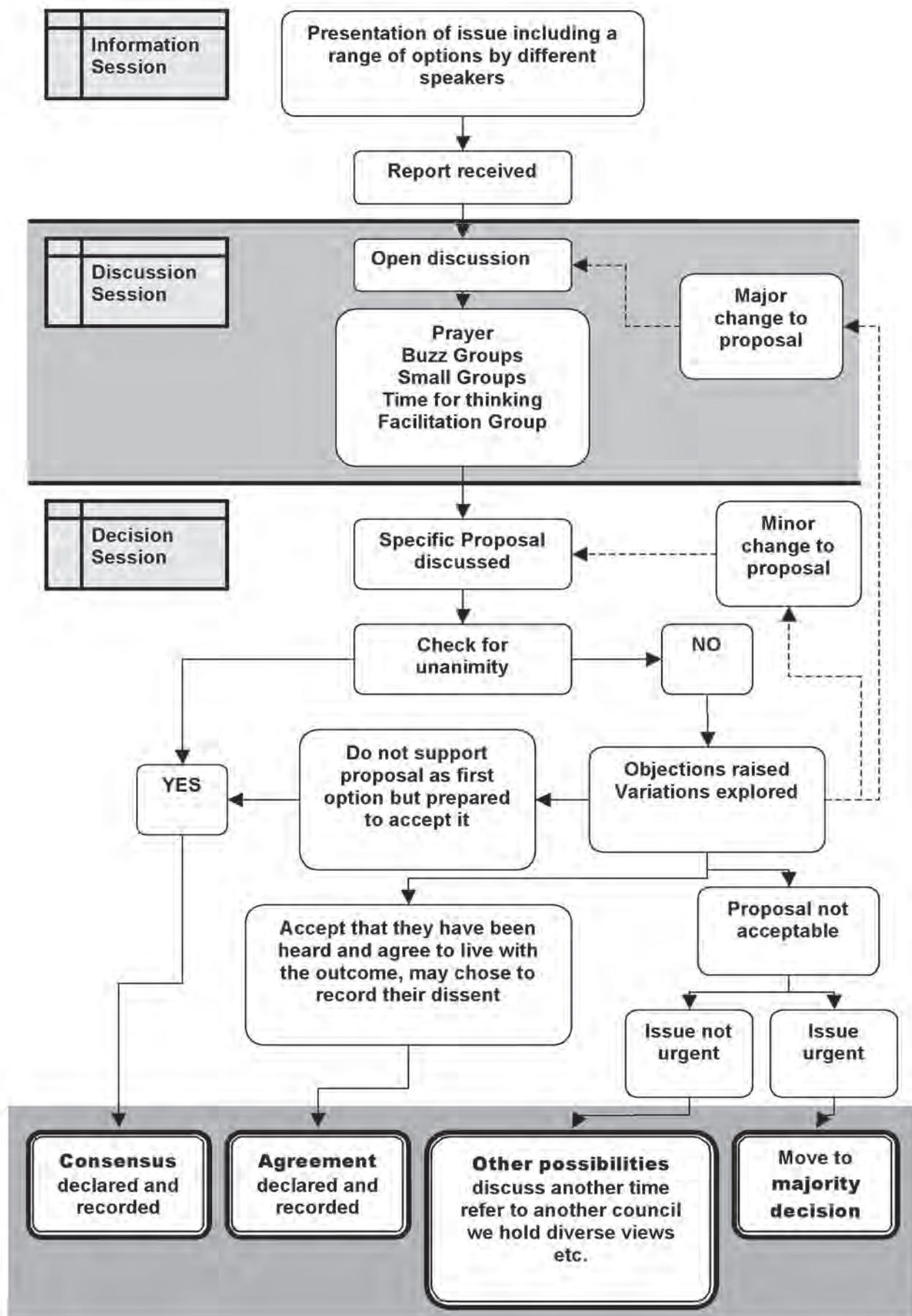
Changes of order may be raised by any member of Assembly at any time during the meeting and must refer to the proceedings of the council. The Moderator asks the member to state their change of order. The Moderator rules on it immediately, or asks for a decision by the Assembly via a simple majority vote.

Changes of order include:

1. Out of order – the speaker is digressing from the matter being discussed.
2. Closed session – that the matter in hand is sensitive and should be conducted in private. This is voted on immediately without discussion. It can be raised more than once during a discussion. If it is agreed, all those who are not members of the council must leave. Members must treat the subsequent discussion in the strictest confidence and must not divulge its content or process to non-members.
3. Adjournment of the discussion – this is voted on immediately without further discussion. It can be proposed more than once in a discussion. It cannot be brought by a person who has already spoken. When the discussion is resumed the person whose speech was interrupted has the right to speak first.

Consensus Decision Making for the United Reformed Church

4. Personal explanation – A member feeling that some material part of their former speech has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may ask to make a personal explanation.
5. Objection – A member may raise objection if the remarks of a speaker are deemed offensive or derogatory.



Trustee's Report and Annual Accounts 2006

General Assembly 2007

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
TRUSTEE'S REPORT AND ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2006

CONTENTS

	Page
Trustee's Report.....	1
Reference and administrative information	1
Structure, governance and management.....	2
Objectives and activities	2
Achievements and performance.....	2
Future developments.....	3
Financial review.....	3
Description of funds	8
Statement of Financial Activities	10
Balance Sheet.....	11
Summary of Fund Movements	12
Cash Flow Statement.....	13
Notes to the accounts	14
Note 1 Accounting policies	14
Note 2 Voluntary income	16
Note 3 Investment income	16
Note 4 Incoming resources from charitable activities	16
Note 5 Analysis of expenditure	17
Note 6 Analysis of grants	18
Note 7 Governance costs	18
Note 8 Support costs	18
Note 9 Notified legacies	18
Note 10 Stipend and salary costs.....	19
Note 11 Tangible fixed assets.....	19
Note 12 Investments	20
Note 13 Programme-related investments.....	20
Note 14 Loans	20
Note 15 Debtors	20
Note 16 Current liabilities (amounts falling due within one year).....	21
Note 17 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund.....	21
Note 18 The United Reformed Church Final Salary Scheme	23
Note 19 Commitments.....	23
Note 20 Cash Flow information	23
Statement of responsibilities for the Trustee's report and annual accounts	24
Independent auditors' report.....	25
Five year summary	27

For readers unfamiliar with financial statements there is an explanatory note at the foot of most pages describing the content in simple terms.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

TRUSTEE'S REPORT

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

General Assembly and Corporate Trustee Registered Office : 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT

Assembly Officers

Moderator of the General Assembly (2006/2007) - Revd Elizabeth Caswell
General Secretary - Revd Dr David Cornick
Clerk of the General Assembly - Revd James Breslin
Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee - Mr William McVey
Deputy General Secretary - Revd Ray Adams
Honorary Treasurer - Mr Eric Chilton

Other Officers

Moderator Elect - Revd Dr Stephen Orchard
Immediate Past Moderator - Revd Dr David Peel

Trustee for the General Assembly and Corporate Trustee: United Reformed Church Trust

(Excepted charitable company limited by guarantee, number 135934)

Chairman: Revd John D Waller Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Other Directors: (appointed by the General Assembly to serve for six years)

Ms Linda Austin (appointed 12 December 2006), Mr Eric Chilton, Revd Dr David Cornick, Mr John Ellis (appointed 12 December 2006), Mr Ernest Gudgeon, Dr Geoffrey Sides, Mr Alan Small (appointed 19 September 2006), Mrs Fiona Smith, Mrs Margaret Stidson, Mr Donald Swift, Revd Dr David Thompson (appointed 12 December 2006).

United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited

(Exempt charity, registered under IPSAct 1965, number 15986R)

Chairman: Revd David Bedford

Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

The names of the other members of the committee of management, appointed for a term of six years, can be obtained from the Secretary.

United Reformed Church

Finance Committee

Convener: Mr Eric Chilton

Chief Finance Officer: Mr Andrew Grimwade
Members, appointed by the General Assembly, serve for a term of four years as detailed in the Annual Reports to the General Assembly

Actuaries

Aon Limited
Carnegie House Peterborough Road
Harrow Middlesex HA1 2AJ

Auditors

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Southwark Towers
32 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9SY

Bankers

HSBC Bank plc
Holborn Branch
31 Holborn
London EC1N 2HR

Dawsons
2 New Square
Lincoln's Inn
London WC2A 3RZ

Legal Advisers

Cobbetts LLP
1 Colmore Square
Birmingham
B4 6AJ

Towns Needham
Kingsgate 2nd Floor
51-53 South King Street
Manchester M2 6DE

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Constitution

The governing body of the United Reformed Church is the General Assembly. The authority under which the General Assembly acts was given by the resolutions passed at the Uniting Assemblies of 1972, 1981 and 2000; and the United Reformed Church Acts 1972, 1981 and 2000 enabled those resolutions to be given legal effect in relation to the finance and property of the Church. These Acts of Parliament together with the Basis, Structures and Rules of Procedure of the United Reformed Church (as contained in sections A - C of the Manual of the United Reformed Church) contain the foundation documents of the Church. Each year General Assembly appoints members to Mission Council, although those appointed to represent Synods are nominated by the Synods concerned. The names of members of Mission Council are listed in the Book of Annual Reports to General Assembly. The purpose of Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community.

Status

The United Reformed Church is a charity excepted from the need to register by the combined effects of section 46(4)(a) of the Charities Act 1993 and The Charities (Exception From Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2002. This exception is expected to end when the Charities Act 2006 is fully implemented in 2008.

Trustees

The Mission Council Advisory Group acted as Trustees for the General Assembly from 2002 until 2006, when General Assembly appointed the United Reformed Church Trust as the Trustee, pending the appointment of a new Trustee body in 2007. The Moderator of General Assembly, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary are expected to be ex-officio members of the new Trustee body, and these three persons are responsible for day to day management of the Church's affairs. The directors of the Trustee have received specific training to assist in the performance of their duties.

Risk Management

The Trustee has undertaken the annual review of risks with the full co-operation of all areas of the Church affected. Those areas with the highest risk have received most attention and steps have been taken to minimise our exposure and to have effective systems in place where needed. It is satisfied that proper controls are in place for monitoring and mitigating these risks. The main risks the Church faces can be categorised as:

- Governance risks
- External risks
- Financial risks
- Operational risks
- Compliance with laws and regulations.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The United Reformed Church is part of the church universal. As such its aim is to proclaim the love of God in Jesus Christ in word and deed. A main strategy to achieve that aim is the provision of public worship in viable congregations across the three nations of England, Scotland and Wales. This is increasingly carried out in partnership with ecumenical colleagues, particularly the Methodist Church with whom we have over four hundred shared congregations.

As the 'Catch the Vision' prayer states, we are 'God's people', being 'transformed by the gospel' in order to 'make a difference'. That 'difference' is being made in many ways, from the preaching of the gospel, through the pastoral care which helps individuals manage the traumas and transitions of life, to the community building undertaken by our Church Related Community Workers, and the funds that we raise to reduce world poverty through 'Commitment for Life'. We would draw particular attention to the success of the latter, which has raised £560,000 this year.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

A detailed review of the work and activities of Mission Council and the General Assembly Standing committees is incorporated in the Book of Annual Reports, Resolutions and Papers to General Assembly.

We remain conscious of the pressures that operate on all the churches of Western Europe. Through the 'Catch the Vision' process we are seeking to re-affirm the core values of the gospel, beginning a process of spiritual growth and regeneration whilst at the same time responding to the spiralling cost of governance (both financially and in time commitment) by re-structuring our conciliar and committee structures, and reducing the size and frequency of the General Assembly. In the past two years we have laid the foundations for re-shaping the Church. We have provided mechanisms for exploring new ways of being church by expanding Special Category

TRUSTEE'S REPORT CONTINUED

Ministry opportunities, created slimmer and more appropriate forms of church governance, and enhanced ecumenical opportunities. This year we particularly welcome the creation of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) which brings together the social responsibility resources of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and ourselves. We will continue to explore with ecumenical partners ways in which co-operation in the provision of central services can maximise the effectiveness of the service offered to local churches, Synods and committees.

Our principal strategy of the provision of public worship continues to be carried out through faithful ordained and lay ministry in our churches. Our two main charitable activities set out in the Statement of Financial Activities are:

- Ministry - the provision of stipendiary ministry through The Plan for Partnership, together with pensions and retired ministers' housing, and
- Training - the preparation of candidates for stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry, through our newly designated Resource Centres for Learning and other training institutions, and lay training through our Training for Learning and Serving programme.

Our other main activities - youth leadership training and the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth, ecumenical involvement at all levels, the Joint Public Issues Team, the Belonging to the World Church programme and our work encouraging multicultural ministries and racial justice - are grouped together as Mission activities. Alongside all these is the work of publishing Reform magazine and other URC publications by our Communications team at Church House.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

We move now into the second phase of the 'Catch the Vision' process. As we seek to help the Church maintain and develop its witness and its engagement with contemporary society, we have:

- Created a new focus on mission by re-structuring the Assembly's committee work, and creating a new post of Secretary for Mission. (these proposals are before this year's Assembly)
- Commissioned a programme on the Bible, evangelism and spirituality, which will be launched across the Church in the Spring of 2008

Our hope is that this will enable our churches to hold the faith with renewed confidence and commitment.

The remainder of this report does not deal with matters included in the Book of Annual Reports, but with financial and other central activities. The Trustee has delegated to the Finance Committee the detailed review of these matters, and the review below represents its report to the Trustee.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

These accounts show the combined income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts and other funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of General Assembly. They also include the operations of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited, which is an exempt charity providing housing and any associated amenities for persons who are retired ministers or widow/ers of ministers of the United Reformed Church. These accounts do not include funds administered by or on behalf of National and Provincial Synods, districts or local churches. The basis on which these accounts have been prepared is set out in note 1.

The Finance Committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of General Assembly, for ensuring that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, the safe custody of assets and the preparation of financial statements, for giving advice to other councils of the Church as appropriate, and for taking such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly.

Reserves Policy

The Balance Sheet on page 11 shows the disposition of the various United Reformed Church funds totalling £38,842k as at 31 December 2006. The term "reserves" describes that part of a charity's income funds that is freely available.

This definition of reserves therefore normally excludes:

- (a) permanent endowment funds;
- (b) expendable endowment funds;
- (c) restricted funds; and any part of unrestricted funds not readily available for spending, specifically;
- (d) income funds which could only be realised by disposing of fixed assets held for charity use and programme related investments.

A description of restricted and capital funds is set out on pages 8 and 9. The unrestricted fund net assets shown in the Balance Sheet, before deducting a pension reserve equal to the actuarially calculated long-term pension liability, amount to £17,936k. They include fixed assets held for charity use of £5,149k and programme related investments of £224k. They also include amounts lent to restricted fund activities of £7,122k, principally to the Retired Ministers' Housing Society for the purchase of fixed assets for charity use; these sums too are not readily available for spending. After deducting these amounts, the balance of unrestricted fund assets readily available is £5,441k. This represents almost three months of unrestricted fund expenditure.

The Finance Committee, which reviews the policy annually, considers that readily available reserves of about three months of unrestricted fund expenditure are adequate to support the Church's ongoing activities.

Investment Policy

The United Reformed Church Trust acts as corporate trustee and agent for the United Reformed Church by holding certain properties and assets as its nominee and handling its income and expenditure. The powers of investment are given under the memorandum and articles of association of the trustee company. The Investment Sub-committee of the Trustee keeps under review our investment policy and monitors the performance of our fund managers. As a result it was decided to share our investments between COIF Charity Funds and M & G's Charifund, and adjustments were made at the start of 2006. The first year since the change has produced a very satisfactory result, both in capital growth and an increased income for those of our funds whose expenditure commitments are greatest.

2006 Financial Results

The results for 2006 are set out in more detail in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 10. This shows that there was, overall, an increase in funds in the year of £3,432k. The following table shows the breakdown of this increase compared with the increase for the previous year:

	2006	2005
	£000	£000
Voluntary income:		
Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	20,199	19,932
Donations, grants and legacies	1,978	3,039
Investment income	780	636
Income from charitable activities	1,332	1,280
Other incoming resources (mostly profit on sale of properties)	2,798	1,214
Total incoming resources	27,087	26,101
Resources expended:		
Charitable activities	24,584	23,566
Governance costs	369	400
Other	51	-
Net incoming resources	2,083	2,135
Gains on investment assets	2,731	2,588
Actuarial (loss) on pension scheme	(1,382)	(2,256)
	3,432	2,467

Ministry and Mission Fund contributions

The pie charts on pages 6 and 7 give a visual picture, showing that 86% of our unrestricted income comes from ministry and mission fund contributions, which total over £20million for the first time and which exceeded the amount pledged. This is once again a magnificent effort, enabling us to support ministry and mission across our three nations, and is the major way in which we fund, in partnership, all our work for the kingdom of God. The pie chart on page 7 shows visually that 87% of our unrestricted expenditure, totalling £19,432k, is used to provide the financial resources to train, equip and provide ministry.

Donations, grants and legacies

We are very grateful for regular substantial grants from a number of trusts, detailed in note 2(b) to the accounts, as well as for many other donations. We do not include anything for legacies in our budget as in recent years they have fluctuated widely. However, we rely on income from this source to help to compensate, over time, for budget deficits and other adverse events.

Investment income

The change in investment policy referred to above accounts for part of this increase.

TRUSTEE'S REPORT CONTINUED

Income from charitable activities

This income, which has largely in the past been deducted from the associated expenditure, includes rental income from retired ministers' housing properties, the accommodation, catering and fee income of Westminster College and the Windermere Centre, as well as book sales and subscriptions to Reform.

Other incoming resources

This largely represents profits from selling retired ministers' housing properties when they fall vacant, which are retained in order to acquire replacement property. A more buoyant housing market in 2006 helped us to dispose of some 'hard to sell' properties, and as a result the cost of acquiring replacement property was matched during the year by receipts from disposals. In addition, proceeds of over £1million were received from the sale of two manses that were no longer required.

Resources expended – Charitable activities

These costs are analysed in note 5 on page 17, and now include a share of support costs.

Ministry: increase £919k. While most costs were similar to the previous year, £770k of the increase in the pension reserve has been charged here as it relates to current or past service costs. Increase in stipends was balanced by a fall in the number of stipendiary ministers.

Training: decrease £64k. Cost increases were offset by lower student numbers.

Other Mission activities: increase £111k. The main increases were in staff pension costs and in grants from certain restricted funds.

Editorial and bookshop: increase £52k. Staff pension costs increased, and there were some write-offs of older publications stock ahead of changes in this department.

Resources expended – Governance

Governance costs are analysed in note 7 on page 18. They include the costs of General Assembly and Mission Council, their advisory and task groups and certain committees, together with the charges of our professional advisers.

Gains on investment assets

The change in investment values from the beginning to end of the year, broken down by fund is shown in the Summary of Fund Movements on page 12. There has been an increase in the value of our investments for the fourth year running. Of the £2,731k increase £1,052k arose on investments held for capital funds which are not available to be spent but provide continuing income. A further £1,033k arose on investments belonging to restricted funds where, in several cases, expenditure in 2005 exceeded income so that a part of the investment value increase has been used to finance current activities. Investment gains and losses over time are shown in the five-year summary on page 27.

Actuarial losses on pension scheme

We are required to take full account of actuarial gains and losses arising each year in the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. In 2006 investment growth was more than offset by the cost of taking account of increased life expectancy of pensioners. More details are given in note 17 to the accounts on page 21.

CONCLUSION

Those wanting more information or explanations about any aspect of the Church's finances are encouraged to address their enquiries to the Treasurer at General Assembly or any other time.

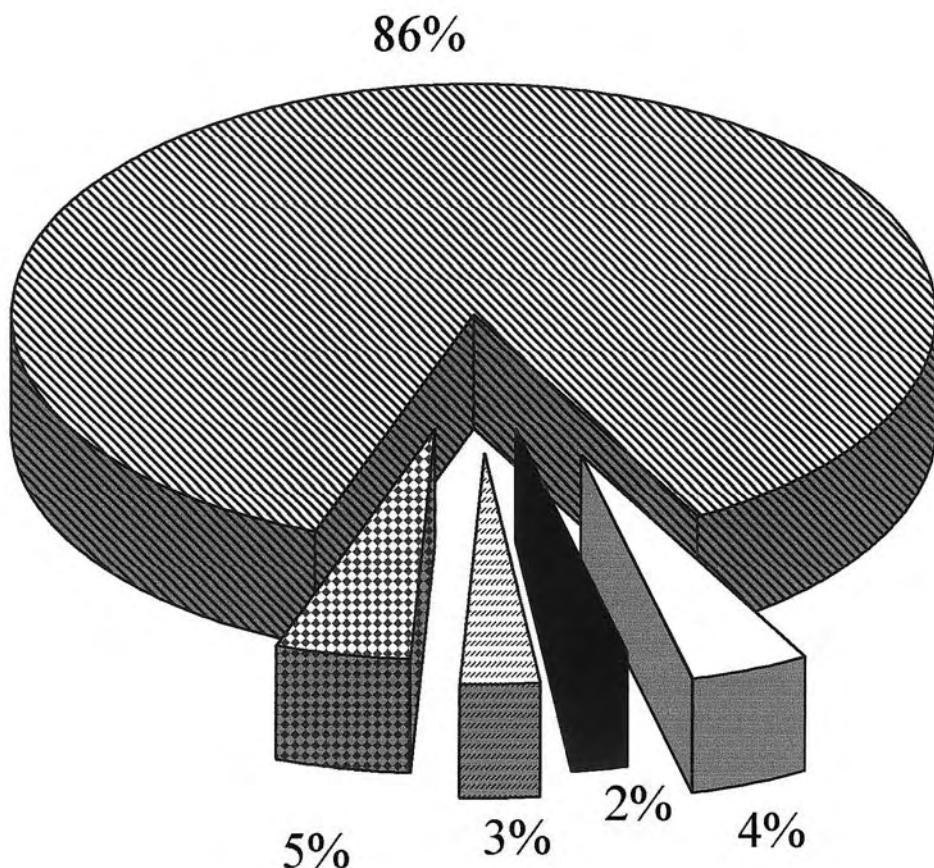
Signed on behalf of the Trustee

Revd John D Waller

Chairman

17 May 2007

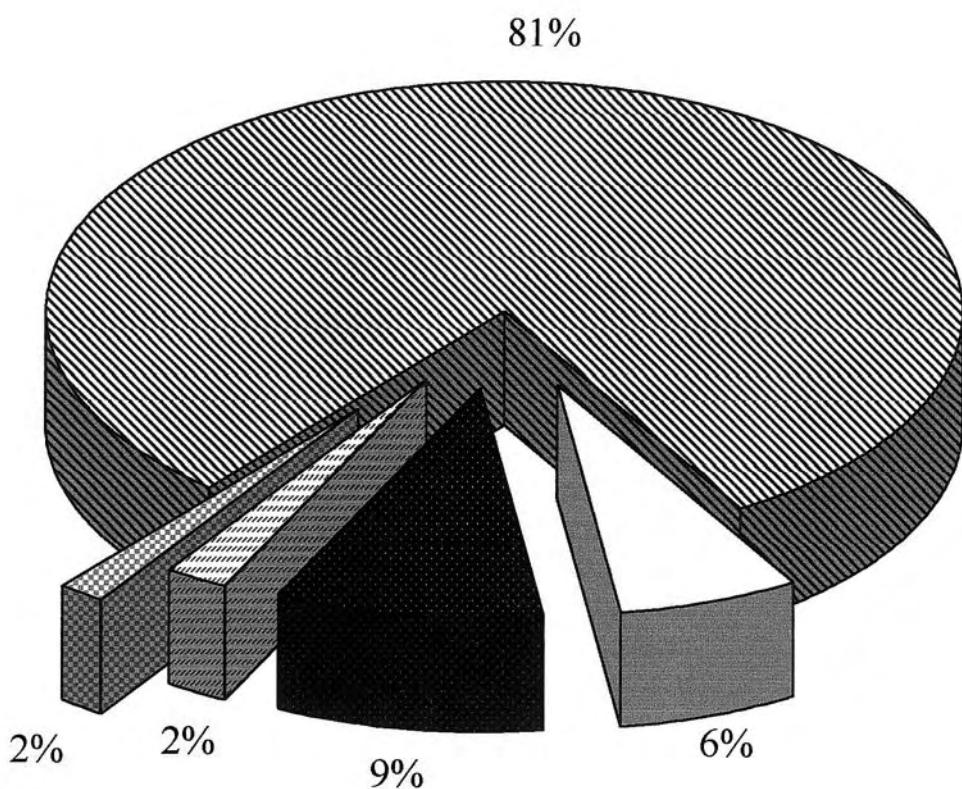
Unrestricted Income - £23.4m
Year ended 31st December 2006



- M&M Fund Contributions
- Donations, Grants and Legacies
- Investment income
- Income from Charitable Activities
- Other incoming resources

TRUSTEE'S REPORT CONTINUED

Unrestricted Expenditure - £22.4m
Year ended 31st December 2006



■ Ministry

□ Training

■ Other Mission Activities

■ Editorial and Bookshop

■ Governance

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS

The movements on our major funds or groups of funds, which are included in the United Reformed Church annual accounts, are shown in summary on page 12. Descriptions of these funds are set out below, with the total amount of each fund as at 31 December 2006 and the major movements in 2006 shown in each heading.

Ministry and Mission Fund: £3,278k	Income	£23,008k
	Expenditure	£22,435k

This is the general fund of the Church through which the bulk of our income and expenditure, covered by the annual budget presented to General Assembly, is passed.

Maintenance of the Ministry Fund: £810k	Income	£56k
Ministerial Training Fund: £187k	Income	£294k

Both of these are capital funds, which are invested to provide income towards the costs of Maintenance of the Ministry and Ministerial Training. Each year's income is transferred to the Ministry and Mission Fund, which is responsible for meeting these costs.

Westminster College Funds: £2,730k	Income inc. transfer	£678k
	Expenditure	£619k

This group of funds are all associated, in some way, with Westminster College. In addition to the College general fund that deals with income and expenditure from its main academic activities, there are library funds, prize funds, scholarship funds, and other funds with a more specific use.

Church Buildings Fund: £3,099k	Income	£169k
	Expenditure	£51k

This fund may be used in the upkeep and repair of the buildings of the local churches of the United Reformed Church and the maintenance of the services therein; in the improvement and extension of the buildings of such churches; and in the provision and erection of buildings for use for the purposes of such churches or as residences for ministers of the United Reformed Church. Both grants and loans are used for these purposes; notes 6 and 14 give some details.

Retired Ministers' Housing Funds and United Reformed Church	Income	£2,070k
Retired Ministers' Housing Society: £18,906k	Expenditure	£499k

The whole of these funds is utilised by the Retired Ministers' Housing Committee in providing accommodation for ministers and ministers' widow/ers in their retirement. Income in 2006 included just over £220k from legacies. Most of the remaining income arises from the profit on the sale of houses, the proceeds from which were re-invested in further house purchases, together with a further £0.7million loaned from other funds. The indebtedness of the Society to the other funds of the Church is included in the Balance Sheet and notes 14 to 16 as inter-fund loans and balances; note 19 gives information on the future commitments.

Welfare Fund: £528k	Income	£54k
	Expenditure	£61k

This fund can be used to relieve cases of need among ministers of the United Reformed Church, their spouses and other dependants. Regular uses have been to provide a grant on the death of a minister to the surviving spouse, and to provide a grant at Christmas to most of the widow/ers of United Reformed Church ministers about whom we know. Medical assistance grants are also paid from this fund, including counselling costs.

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS CONTINUED

Retired Ministers' Aid Fund: £150k	Income inc. transfers	£43k
Retired Ministers' Fund: £1,133k	Expenditure	£66k
	Income inc. transfers	£164k
	Expenditure	£444k

These funds are used to supplement the pensions paid to ministers and ministers' widow/ers, principally by upgrading the pensions of former ministers of the Congregational Church and the Churches of Christ and the widow/ers of such ministers to a level of 95% of the pension that would have been paid if the minister's service had been to the former Presbyterian Church, and also to pay certain ill-health early retirement pensions. The balances shown for these funds are now after deducting the actuarially assessed cost of the Church's constructive obligation to continue making these payments.

World Church and Mission Funds: £820k	Income	£32k
	Expenditure	£32k

These funds are used by the Ecumenical Committee under the "Belonging to the World Church" programme and for other purposes, as the terms of the trust permit.

Windermere Centre Fund: £346k

Yardley Hastings Fund: £590k

These funds were raised to develop the Windermere Centre and the Yardley Hastings Centre and are mainly invested in those properties. The annual income and costs of the Windermere Centre are shown through the Ministry and Mission Fund. Following the closure of the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings, this property is being leased to East Midlands Synod.

Commitment for Life Fund: £23k	Income	£560k
	Expenditure	£560k

This programme involves substantial sums of money being collected through the Church and Society office, and disbursed for Christian Aid programmes and other purposes. The balance held at the year end represents sums received, which had not yet been allocated.

Other Funds: £6,241k

Being: Capital funds £4,517k

Income £ nil

Expenditure £ nil

Restricted funds £1,724k

Income £269k

Expenditure £237k

There are some fifty other funds in the care of the United Reformed Church Trust, covering many different activities relating to the Church centrally, and some to the wider parts of the United Reformed Church.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

2005		note	2006		
Total funds £'000	Incoming resources		Total funds £'000	— Income funds —	Capital funds £'000
(restated)			Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
19,932	Incoming resources from generated funds				
678	Voluntary Income	2(a)	20,199	20,199	-
787	Ministry and Mission Fund contributions			-	-
556	Grants receivable	2(b)	683	636	47
1,018	Legacies		521	291	230
3,039	Commitment for Life donations		558	-	558
	Other donations		216	44	172
			1,978	971	1,007
635	Investment income	3	780	426	354
394	Incoming resources from charitable activities	4			
299	Ministry		433	-	433
222	Training		290	40	250
365	Other Mission activities		242	242	-
1,280	Editorial and bookshop		367	367	-
			1,332	649	683
1,035	Other incoming resources				
179	Profit on sale of properties		2,604	999	1,605
	Other income		194	114	80
26,100	Total incoming resources		27,087	23,358	3,729
18,250	Resources expended				
2,113	Charitable activities	5			
2,733	Ministry		19,169	18,004	1,165
470	Training		2,049	1,428	621
23,566	Other Mission activities		2,844	2,117	727
	Editorial and bookshop		522	522	-
			24,584	22,071	2,513
400	Governance costs	7	369	364	5
-	Other resources expended		51	-	51
23,966	Total resources expended		25,004	22,435	2,569
2,134	Net incoming resources before transfers		2,083	923	1,160
-	Transfers between funds		-	(220)	220
2,134	Net incoming resources before other recognised gains and losses		2,083	703	1,380
2,588	Gains on investment assets		2,731	646	1,033
(2,256)	Actuarial gains(losses) on pension scheme		(1,382)	(1,382)	
2,466	Net movement in funds		3,432	(33)	2,413
37,072	Reconciliation of Funds		39,538	2,910	28,887
(4,128)	Funds as previously stated		(4,128)		(4,128)
32,944	Prior year adjustment		35,410	2,910	24,759
	Funds brought forward as restated				7,741
35,410	Total funds carried forward		38,842	2,877	27,172
					8,793

There were no discontinued activities or acquisitions during the year.

The notes on pages 14 to 23 form an integral part of these financial statements.

This page shows the total of the income and expenditure accounts of all funds administered centrally on behalf of the whole Church to advance its religious and charitable work. The total for 2006 is divided between "Unrestricted income funds" which are available for the general purposes of the Church, "Restricted income funds" which may be spent for specific purposes only, and "Capital funds" which cannot be spent.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2006

Total		Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Capital
2005	Notes	2006	Funds	Funds	Funds
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
restated					
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	11				
Houses for retired ministers		27,706	-	27,347	359
Houses for serving ministers		4,768	4,768	-	-
Other properties		2,248	110	1,231	907
Total properties		34,722	4,878	28,578	1,266
Cars and equipment		335	271	64	-
		35,057	5,149	28,642	1,266
Investments and loans					
Investments	12	21,995	5,557	9,441	6,997
Programme-related investments	13	224	224	-	-
Loans, including inter-fund loans	14	4,982	3,134	1,848	-
		62,258	14,064	39,931	8,263
Current assets					
Stock		75	75	-	-
Debtors	15	5,664	4,944	190	530
Short term investments	12	-	-	-	-
Bank balances and money on call		1,035	735	300	-
		6,774	5,754	490	530
Current liabilities	16	6,591	1,882	4,709	-
Net current liabilities		183	3,872	(4,219)	530
		62,441	17,936	35,712	8,793
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	14	4,412	-	4,412	-
Net assets excluding pension liability		58,029	17,936	31,300	8,793
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	17	(15,059)	(15,059)	-	-
Other pension obligations	17	(4,128)		(4,128)	
Net assets including pension liability		38,842	2,877	27,172	8,793
Unrestricted income funds					
General		17,936			
Pension reserve		(15,059)			
Total		2,877			
Restricted income funds		27,172			
Capital funds		8,793			
TOTAL FUNDS (see page 12)		38,842			

Approved by the Trustee on 17 May 2007 and signed on its behalf by

Revd John D Waller
ChairmanEric C Chilton
Treasurer

The notes on pages 14 to 23 form an integral part of these financial statements.

This page shows the combined total of assets and liabilities of all the funds administered centrally for the benefit of the whole Church. It includes, in particular, the assets and liabilities of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd.

SUMMARY OF FUND MOVEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

Fund	Classification (see note 1(ii))	Balance 1 Jan 2006 restated £'000	Incoming Resources £'000	Resources Expended £'000	Transfers between funds £'000	Gains on investment assets £'000	Actuarial gains (losses) £'000	Balance 31 Dec 2006 £'000
Ministry and Mission Fund	Capital Unrestricted	401 2,910	23,008	(22,435)	130	646	(1,382)	401 2,877
Maintenance of the Ministry Fund	Capital Unrestricted	716 0	56		(56)	94		810 0
Ministerial Training Fund	Capital Unrestricted	165 0	294		(294)	22		187 0
Westminster College Funds	Capital Restricted	1,152 1,348	369	(619)	309	107	65	1,259 1,471
Church Buildings Fund	Capital Restricted	184 2,596	169	(51)		201		184 2,915
Retired Ministers' Housing Funds	Capital Restricted	359 2,849	124	(65)	(83)			359 2,825
Retired Ministers' Housing Society	Capital Restricted	0 14,210	1,946	(434)				0 15,722
Welfare Fund	Capital Restricted	459 4	54	(61)	4	68		527 1
Retired Ministers' Aid Fund	Capital Restricted	194 (147)	43	(66)		29	97	223 (73)
Retired Ministers' Fund	Capital Restricted	15 884	164	(444)	19	1	495	16 1,117
World Church and Mission Funds	Capital Restricted	274 467	32	(32)		36	43	310 510
Windermere Centre Fund	Capital Restricted	0 346						0 346
Yardley Hastings Fund	Capital Restricted	0 590						0 590
Commitment for Life Fund	Capital Restricted	0 23	560	(560)				0 23
Other Funds	Capital Restricted	3,822 1,590	269	(237)	(29)	695	131	4,517 1,724
Totals (see page 10)		35,410	27,087	(25,004)	0	2,731	(1,382)	38,842
Comprising:	Capital	7,741	0	0	0	1,052	0	8,793
	Restricted	24,759	3,729	(2,569)	220	1,033	0	27,172
	Unrestricted	2,910	23,358	(22,435)	(220)	646	(1,382)	2,877

The notes on pages 14 to 23 form an integral part of these financial statements.

This page shows the breakdown of the main totals in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 10 by major fund or group of funds. It is intended to be used as a reference source rather than to be read through at one go.

CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006

2005 £'000	2006 £'000
Reconciliation of net incoming resources shown in the Statement of Financial Activities to the actual cash outflow from general activities	
2,135	Net incoming resources before revaluations and investment asset disposals (see page 10)
(5)	Decrease/(Increase) in stock
45	Decrease in debtors
(254)	Decrease in creditors
958	Increase/(Decrease) in sums held for Synods and congregations
(1,036)	Profit on sale of properties
145	Depreciation and impairment
(19)	Interest added to loans
(7)	Interest added to short term investment
(608)	Other investment income
(100)	Donations of property received
(859)	Cash endowment received
87	Difference between pension contributions and current service cost
482	Net cash inflow/(outflow) from general activities
	(1,732)

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

482	Net cash inflow/(outflow) from general activities (above)	(1,732)
Returns on investments and servicing of finance		
7	Interest on short term investment	-
(43)	Other interest (paid)	(29)
651	Dividends and other investment income received	791
615		762
Capital expenditure and financial investment		
(3,489)	Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	(3,040)
1,596	Receipts from sales of tangible fixed assets	4,109
(5,086)	Payments to acquire long term investments	(6,425)
4,630	Receipts from sales of long term investments	7,090
(34)	Loans and advances made to congregations and ministers	(200)
250	Loans repaid by congregations and ministers	182
(2,133)		1,716
Management of liquid resources		
(7)	Cash repaid from (added to) short term investment	177
Financing		
859	Addition to capital endowment	-
-	Payments from capital endowment	-
859		-
(184)	Increase (Decrease) in Cash	(note 20)
		923

The notes on pages 14 to 23 form an integral part of these financial statements

Not all income or expenditure results in an immediate cash receipt or payment. This page (and the associated note 20 on page 23) shows the difference between net incoming resources (some cash and some not cash) and actual cash flow. They then show how cash has been spent or invested, or realised from the sale of properties or investments during the year so as to increase our cash balances by £923,000

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE 1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, as modified by the inclusion of listed investments and investment properties at market value. The accounts have been prepared in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice" (revised 2005) issued in February 2005, with applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards and with the Charities Act 1993. Certain items of income and expenditure, previously shown net, are now shown separately; this, and other reclassifications arising from adopting the 2005 SORP, have resulted in various amendments to the analysis of 2005 comparative figures.

The particular accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

(i) Scope

The accounts show the combined income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts and other funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly and includes the total financial operations of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited ("the society"). The society is a separate exempt charity registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 and is accounted for as a separate fund and branch of the Church in accordance with the SORP.

(ii) Classification of funds

Unrestricted income funds may be spent generally for furthering the religious and charitable work of the Church. Restricted income funds are funds whose use is restricted to specific purposes according to the terms on which the funds were received. However, if the purpose is one that forms part of the Church's regular expenditure and the income of the funds could therefore be fully spent each year, the restriction has no practical effect and funds with such restrictions are treated as unrestricted.

Capital funds include permanent endowments that are required to be retained but the income from these funds can be spent for the benefit of the Church subject, in certain cases, to specific restrictions contained in the original endowment. Other capital funds may be converted to income at the discretion of the trustees.

The main funds included in these accounts, and their classification, are listed on page 12. A brief description of these funds is given on pages 8 and 9.

(iii) Donations and legacies

Donations and legacies are accounted for on a receivable basis. In accordance with this policy, legacies are included when advice has been received from the personal representative of an estate that payment will be made or property transferred and the amount involved can be quantified. Gifts in kind are included within income at market value at the date of the gift. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included.

(iv) Grants

Incoming grants are accounted for on a receivable basis. Outgoing grants are accounted for on a payable basis. Grants payable are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when approved and applied for. The value of such grants unpaid at the end of the year is accrued, unless there are unfulfilled conditions attached to them. In such cases these grants are treated as contingent liabilities.

(v) Ministry and Mission Fund contributions, investment income and other income

Ministry and Mission fund contributions, investment income and other income are accounted for on a receivable basis. Contributions to the fund are agreed annually in advance with each Synod. Any amount received in excess of the agreed contribution is held in creditors as 'sums held for Synods', to be released as part of that Synod's fund contribution in any following year or refunded to the Synod.

(vi) Gains and losses on investments

Realised and unrealised gains and losses on investments are dealt with in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year in which they arise, based on the brought forward valuations or cost of subsequent additions.

(vii) Resources expended

Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and allocated to the appropriate heading in the accounts. Any irrecoverable VAT is included with the costs to which it relates. The support costs included in note 8 relate to the whole of the Church's activities and a proportion of these costs is allocated to expenditure headings on a basis that is consistent with the use of the resources. Reference should be made to note 8 for further information on the allocation of support costs.

(viii) Pensions

The Church operates a funded defined benefit pension scheme for ministers and CRCWs receiving a stipend, known as The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. The assets of the scheme are managed independently of the Church. Pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of an independent qualified actuary.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 1 (continued)

(viii) Pensions (continued)

Following adoption of FRS17 – Retirement benefits, the amounts charged to expenditure are the current service costs; which are included under Ministry costs. The interest cost and the expected return on assets are shown as a net charge or credit within Ministry costs. Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately and disclosed in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the attained age method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term to the scheme liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained triennially and are updated at each year end. The resulting defined benefit asset or liability is presented separately after other net assets on the Balance Sheet.

The multi-employer defined benefit scheme, where the Church is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities, is treated as a defined contribution scheme, and the amount charged in respect of pension costs is the contributions payable in the year, which is included within the appropriate expenditure heading in the Statement of Financial Activities.

(ix) Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets having an initial cost of £250 or less are written off on acquisition. Assets having an initial cost greater than £250 are stated at cost when purchased and at valuation when received in specie.

Many properties used as houses for retired ministers are owned jointly with tenants or Synods of the United Reformed Church. The value in the Balance Sheet of such properties is the cost (less any impairment charged) to the Church of the Church's share in the property.

Properties are maintained in a state of sound repair. The Finance Committee considers whether any impairment is necessary considering the lives of the properties and their residual value. Any material deficit between the anticipated recoverable amount of freehold property and its carrying value shown in the accounts is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Depreciation is charged on tangible assets as a percentage of cost as follows:

Improvements to property rented on operating leases	5 % pa
Housing properties (when charged)	2% pa
Cars, computers and photocopiers	25 % pa
Other furniture and equipment	10 % pa

The value of land is not depreciated.

(x) Operating leases

Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged to the income and expenditure account as incurred.

(xi) Investments

Listed securities and investment properties are included at market value at the Balance Sheet date. Unlisted securities are stated at cost as there is no readily ascertainable market price. For gilt-edged securities purchased within ten years of maturity at a cost in excess of redemption amount, the excess is amortised over the period to maturity.

(xii) Stock

Stock, which consists mainly of books in the bookshop, is stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value after making allowance for obsolete or slow moving items.

(xiii) Westminster College

With the exception of certain improvements and additions since 1983, the buildings of Westminster College are not included in the Balance Sheet since the use of the College was originally a gift to the Church, the value of which cannot readily be ascertained without excessive cost. In addition there is a covenant in perpetuity restricting the Church's ability to use the College for purposes wider than that of a theological college; hence an open market value cannot be applied.

(xiv) Prior period adjustment

Note 17 explains the treatment that has been adopted for the first time this year in recognising on the Balance Sheet the net present value of future pension grants, based on an actuarial assessment at 31 December 2006.

As there is no historical information available for the equivalent figures at 31 December 2005 and 2004, the change in accounting policy has been reflected by including the same figure as a long term liability in the Balance Sheet at each of those dates. The Trustee is satisfied that this approach is justified in terms of the significance of this item to the Church and it does not represent a material misstatement in the amounts charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the year.

The effect has been to reduce net funds by £4,128k at both 31 December 2005 and 2006. In future years changes in the assessment during the year will be recognised as movements in the Statement of Financial Activities.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 2 VOLUNTARY INCOME

(a) Ministry and Mission Fund Contributions

Synods	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Northern	1,120	1,145
North Western	2,076	1,960
Mersey	1,279	1,250
Yorkshire	1,231	1,231
East Midlands	1,272	1,290
West Midlands	1,560	1,547
Eastern	1,720	1,701
South Western	1,376	1,346
Wessex	2,102	2,135
Thames North	2,224	2,131
Southern	2,933	2,921
Wales	696	711
Scotland	610	564
	20,199	19,932

(b) Grants Receivable

The Church receives income from a number of trusts. The most significant are described below.

Congregational Memorial Hall Trust - £350k (2005 £315k). In 1999 this trust disposed of its interest in the building standing on the site of the former Memorial Hall. The proceeds of sale are now invested and the income, after meeting trust expenses, is distributed to the United Reformed Church and non-uniting Congregational churches. The United Reformed Church's interest in these distributions is 70%.

New College London Trust - £286k (2005 £318k). This trust holds assets relating to the former New College London on behalf of the United Reformed Church and non-uniting Congregational churches. The United Reformed Church's interest amounts to approximately 82% and is applied to ministerial training.

The Cheshunt Foundation - £47k (2005 £45k). The foundation supports Westminster College by paying the stipend and expenses of one of the lecturers, by contributing to the college budget, and by providing financial support for ministers taking post-ordination training and lay training.

NOTE 3 INVESTMENT INCOME

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Unitised Funds	754	595
Unlisted securities	4	3
Property	33	53
Interest on short term investment and bank deposits	(11)	(16)
	780	635

NOTE 4 INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

These comprise:	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Retired Ministers' Housing - rents	433	394
Westminster College - accommodation, conferences, catering and fees	250	251
Windermere Centre - accommodation, catering and courses	179	184
Bookshop sales	202	212
Reform magazine - subscriptions and advertising	165	153
Other programmes - fees, grants and sales	103	86
	1,332	1,280

This page and the following seven pages set out additional information about various aspects of the Church's finances. Note 17 contains further disclosures on pension funds as required by Financial Reporting Standard 17.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 5 ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

(a) The amount spent on the Church's charitable activities, including support costs, is summarised as follows:

	Direct programme expenditure £'000	Grant funding £'000	Support costs £'000	2006 Total £'000	2005 Total £'000
Ministry	17,195	1,004	970	19,169	18,250
Training	1,452	475	122	2,049	2,113
Mission	1,613	1,041	190	2,844	2,733
Editorial and bookshop	467	-	55	522	470
	20,727	2,520	1,337	24,584	23,566

(b) The amounts spent on charitable activities, excluding support costs, may be analysed by programme as follows:

	Direct programme expenditure £'000	Grant funding £'000	2006 Total £'000	2005 Total £'000
Ministry				
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	15,993	382	16,375	15,579
Synod moderators - stipends and expenses	590	-	590	551
Pension grants	-	583	583	598
Retired ministers' housing	416	-	416	373
Ministries committee	195	40	235	225
	17,194	1,005	18,199	17,326
Training				
Initial training for stipendiary ministry	947	475	1,422	1,420
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	81	-	81	91
Ongoing training for ministry	149	-	149	176
Lay training	130	-	130	133
Education and Learning committee	145	-	145	156
	1,452	475	1,927	1,976
Mission				
Grants to local churches	-	146	146	193
Ecumenical and international relations	357	199	556	642
Church and Society	84	3	87	70
Commitment for Life programme	64	496	560	540
Life and Witness	89	-	89	90
Windermere Centre programme	330	5	335	302
Racial Justice and multicultural ministries	98	1	99	111
Youth and Children's work	479	47	526	459
Pilots development	97	-	97	86
Other programmes	15	144	159	48
	1,613	1,041	2,654	2,541
Editorial and bookshop				
Reform magazine	205	-	205	194
URC Bookshop	262	-	262	213
	467	-	467	407

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 6 ANALYSIS OF GRANTS

	Grants to Institutions £'000	Grants to individuals £'000
Pension grants		583
Welfare and other ministry grants		382
Student maintenance and training		475
Local churches - mission and facilities	151	
Chaplains	40	
Ecumenical church bodies	199	
Commitment for Life programme	496	
Other programmes	179	15
	1,065	1,455

Major grants to institutions in the year were:

Organisation	Type	£'000
Christian Aid	Commitment for Life	419
World Development Movement	Commitment for Life	56
Council for World Mission	Ecumenical	50
Churches Together in Britain & Ireland	Ecumenical	41

NOTE 7 GOVERNANCE COSTS

The Church's governance costs consisted of the following direct and indirect costs:

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
General Assembly	218	227
Mission Council and its advisory and task groups	60	57
Auditors' remuneration	31	30
Legal and professional fees	35	54
Support costs allocated	25	32
	369	400

NOTE 8 SUPPORT COSTS

The Church's support costs comprise the premises costs of United Reformed Church House, and the staff and office costs in respect of: Central Secretariat (including Human Resources), Finance, Communications and Information Technology. These costs have been apportioned across the areas of activity on the basis and in the amounts shown below.

Basis of apportionment Charitable activities	Premises costs £'000	Computer costs £'000	Staff and office costs £'000	2006 Total £'000	2005 Total £'000
	Area	Staff	Total costs		
Ministry	53	42	875	970	923
Training	22	8	92	122	137
Mission	33	29	128	190	192
Editorial and bookshop	22	11	22	55	64
Governance	7	1	17	25	32
	137	91	1,134	1,362	1,348

NOTE 9 NOTIFIED LEGACIES

Notification of two legacies for the general funds of the Church has been received that have not been included in the accounts because the conditions for recognition have not yet been met. It is estimated that the amount receivable from these legacies will be around £50k (2005: five legacies, £300k).

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 10 STIPEND AND SALARY COSTS

During the year the following stipend and salary costs were incurred:

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Ministers and Church Related Community Workers : 632 (2005 : 652)		
Gross stipends	12,711	12,790
Social Security costs	1,175	1,181
Pension contributions	1,839	1,749
	<u>15,725</u>	<u>15,720</u>
Lay staff : 96 (2005 : 94)		
Gross salaries	1,868	1,766
Social Security costs	180	169
Pension contributions	249	132
	<u>2,297</u>	<u>2,067</u>

The numbers shown represent the average for the year, and staff working for part of the year are included at the appropriate proportion calculated on a full time equivalent basis. They include staff working at Church House in London, the Windermere Centre and Westminster College in Cambridge.

There were no ministers, Church Related Community Workers or employees whose emoluments, excluding employer pension contributions, exceeded £60,000 during 2006 or 2005.

In addition, a great amount of time, the value of which it is impossible to reflect in these financial statements, is donated by thousands of volunteers throughout the United Kingdom.

Individuals acting in a trustee capacity for the various United Reformed Church trusts received no remuneration in respect of their services as trustee, other than the reimbursement of travel expenses to 14 individuals during the year ended 31 December 2006 totalling £1,627 (2005 £2,812).

NOTE 11 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Houses for retired ministers £'000	Houses for serving ministers £'000	Other properties £'000	Cars and equipment £'000	Total £'000
Cost					
At 1 January 2006	26,908	5,286	2,497	1,078	35,769
Additions during year	2,897	12		131	3,040
Disposals during year	(1,162)	(370)	(33)	(93)	(1,657)
At 31 December 2006	28,643	4,928	2,464	1,116	37,151
Depreciation					
At 1 January 2006	993	180	197	741	2,111
Charged during year			21	115	136
Written back on disposal	(56)	(20)	(2)	(75)	(153)
At 31 December 2006	937	160	216	781	2,094
Net book value					
At 31 December 2006	<u>27,706</u>	<u>4,768</u>	<u>2,248</u>	<u>335</u>	<u>35,057</u>
At 31 December 2005	<u>25,915</u>	<u>5,106</u>	<u>2,300</u>	<u>337</u>	<u>33,658</u>

Of the land and buildings included above, £4,096k (2005: £3,824k) are leasehold.

Although the total market value of all properties is not practicable to quantify, it is considerably in excess of the carrying value shown above.

At 31 December 2006 358 (2005: 363) houses were owned for housing retired ministers and 18 (2005 : 20) houses for serving ministers.

Other properties include premises improvements at United Reformed Church House, the Yardley Hastings and Windermere Centres, and building costs capitalised at Westminster College since 1983.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 12 INVESTMENTS

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Long term investments		
Carrying value at beginning of year	19,930	16,886
Additions to investments at cost	6,425	5,086
Disposals at carrying value	(7,090)	(4,630)
Net gains/(losses) on revaluation	2,730	2,588
Carrying value at end of year	<u>21,995</u>	<u>19,930</u>

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Investments held for the longer term comprise:		
Units in Common Investment Funds at market value	21,026	19,310
Other listed securities at market value	1	1
Investment properties	967	619
	<u>21,995</u>	<u>19,930</u>

All investments are in UK companies, common investment funds or properties. Investment properties are professionally valued every five years. The last professional valuation was carried out at 31 December 2006 by: Mr P J Millinship MA, BSc, MRICS of Cluttons LLP.

The Finance Committee has considered investment values as at 31 December 2006 and made changes if and as required.

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Short term investments		
Short term investments at 1 January	177	170
Interest added	5	7
Investment repaid	(182)	-
	<u>-</u>	<u>177</u>

Short term investments comprised money market term deposits.

NOTE 13 PROGRAMME-RELATED INVESTMENTS

Programme-related investments are investments made in pursuit of the Church's charitable purposes, the primary motivation for which is not financial but to further our objectives and programme. The principal programme-related investment is £200k as a Founder Member of Luther King House Educational Trust, which owns the property that houses our resource centre for learning at Northern College.

NOTE 14 LOANS

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
External loans comprise:		
To churches	465	421
To ministers	105	113
Inter-fund loans	<u>4,412</u>	<u>4,121</u>
	<u>4,982</u>	<u>4,655</u>

Loans to ministers are generally interest free. Loans to churches bear interest at rates between 3½% and 5½%, except for certain loans, which are interest free for an initial period of two years.

Inter-fund loans represent the long term indebtedness of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society to other funds of the Church. Loans have been made available for the purchase of properties, for as long as they are required, to enable the Society to fulfil its objectives.

NOTE 15 DEBTORS

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Debtors comprise:		
Tax recoverable	7	8
Prepayments and accrued income	471	604
Other debtors	563	636
Inter-fund balances	<u>4,623</u>	<u>3,775</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 16 CURRENT LIABILITIES - amounts falling due within one year

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Current liabilities comprise:		
Sums held for Synods and congregations	624	2,078
Accruals and deferred income	664	337
Other creditors	680	1,110
Inter-fund balances	4,623	3,775
	<u>6,591</u>	<u>7,301</u>

Included within the 'Sums held for Synods and congregations' is £373k (2005 £362k) which represents amounts donated to the Ministry and Mission Fund by individual Synods in excess of their agreed annual contribution. These amounts will be released as part of that Synod's contribution to the fund in any following year or refunded to the Synod.

NOTE 17 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION FUND

Pensions for most ministers are provided by The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. The Fund is a defined benefit pension scheme and the assets are invested and managed by an independent trustee.

Triennial actuarial valuations of the pension scheme are performed by a qualified actuary. The most recent formal actuarial review of the defined benefit pension scheme was at 1 January 2006. This has been updated by the actuary at 31 December 2006 using revised assumptions that are consistent with the requirements of FRS 17. The mortality assumptions used are based on those used at the 2006 formal actuarial review, and include a further material strengthening in the mortality rates as the result of the actuary's detailed analysis of the scheme's actual experience over the last few years. These have added to the scheme's liabilities and give rise to a further increase in the pension reserve.

a) Contributions

The defined benefit scheme is funded and is not contracted-out of the state scheme. As from 1 January 2004 the Church's contribution rate was fixed at 14.95% of pensionable pay, contributing £1,743,000 in 2006, and members have contributed at the rate of 4.5% of pensionable pay. In 2006 the Church made additional contributions at 0.7% of pensionable pay. For 2007 the contribution rates increase to 17.25% by the Church and 5.75% by members.

b) Assumptions

The major assumptions used by the actuary in assessing scheme liabilities on a FRS 17 basis were:

	As at 31 December		
	2006	2005	2004
	% pa	% pa	% pa
Rate of increase in pensionable stipends	4.1	3.9	3.9
Rate of increase in Limited RPI pensions in payment (capped at 5%)	3.1	2.9	2.9
Discount rate (pre-retirement)	5.3	4.8	5.3
Discount rate (post-retirement)	5.3	4.8	5.3
RPI inflation assumption	3.1	2.9	2.9

c) FRS 17 Balance Sheet information

	2006		2005	
	Long term expected return	Value as at 31 Dec £'000	Long term expected Return	Value as at 31 Dec £'000
Equities	7.75%	30,080	7.65%	29,244
Government bonds	4.50%	44,378	4.10%	42,485
Cash	5.25%	<u>351</u>	4.50%	<u>509</u>
Market value of assets		74,809		72,238
Present value of scheme liabilities		<u>(89,868)</u>		<u>(85,145)</u>
Actuarial (deficit) in the scheme fund		<u>(15,059)</u>		<u>(12,907)</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 17 (continued)

d) Movements during the year:

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Deficit in scheme at the beginning of the year	(12,907)	(10,564)
Movement in the year:		
Current service cost	(2,099)	(1,737)
Contributions	1,824	1,743
Past service cost	(395)	-
Other finance income	(100)	(93)
Actuarial gain/(loss)	(1,382)	(2,256)
Deficit in scheme at the end of the year	<u>(15,059)</u>	<u>(12,907)</u>

e) The charge to the Statement of Financial Activities for the year comprised:

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Operating charge		
Current service cost	2,099	1,737
Past service cost	395	-
Settlements and curtailments	-	-
Total operating charge	<u>2,494</u>	<u>1,737</u>
Finance cost		
Expected return on pension scheme assets	3,944	3,830
Interest on pension scheme liabilities	(4,044)	(3,923)
Net (cost)/return	<u>(100)</u>	<u>(93)</u>
Analysis of amount recognised in Funds		
Actual return less expected return on pension scheme assets	698	4,162
Experience gains and losses arising on scheme liabilities	(140)	(1,131)
Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of the scheme liabilities	(1,940)	(5,287)
Actuarial loss recognised in Funds	<u>(1,382)</u>	<u>(2,256)</u>

f) History of experience gains and losses

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Difference between actual and expected return on scheme assets		
- amount	698	4,162
- % of scheme assets	0.9%	5.8%
Experience gains and losses on scheme liabilities		
- amount	(140)	(1,131)
- % of present value of scheme liabilities	(0.2%)	(1.3%)
Total amount recognised in Funds		
- amount	(1,382)	(2,256)
- % of scheme liabilities	(1.5%)	(2.6%)

Other pension obligations

SOPR 2005 requires that constructive obligations, although not legally binding, be recognised on a charity's balance sheet. The United Reformed Church considers that it has a long term constructive obligation in respect of:

- a) the pension supplements it pays to former ministers of the Congregational Church and the Churches of Christ and the widow/ers of those ministers, in order to bring their pension to a level of 95% of the pension that would have been paid if the minister's service had been to the former Presbyterian Church, and
- b) other pension grants, principally for ill-health early retirement until 2004.

An independent actuarial assessment of the net present value of these future payments has been obtained, using the same assumptions as for the FRS 17 calculations above; this value has been deducted from the assets of the Retired Ministers' Fund or the Retired Ministers' Aid Fund included in the Balance Sheet. Comparative figures have been adjusted by a prior year adjustment, so that the total funds of the Church at both 31 December 2005 and 2006 have been reduced by £4,128k.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 18 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH FINAL SALARY SCHEME

The United Reformed Church contributes to a lay staff pension scheme known as the "Final Salary" scheme, which is administered by The Pensions Trust. This is operated as a defined benefit scheme but the United Reformed Church is not the only participating employer in the scheme and is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities – each employer in that scheme pays a common contribution rate.

During 2006 the United Reformed Church contributed 18.5% (2005 : 10%) of basic salary in respect of members of the Final Salary scheme, amounting to £239k (2005: £122k). At 31 December 2006 £21k of these contributions was outstanding. Members contributed at the rate of 5% of pensionable salary throughout the accounting period.

Triennial actuarial valuations of the Final Salary Scheme are performed by a professionally qualified actuary. The most recent formal actuarial review of the defined benefit pension scheme was at 30 September 2004, when the Scheme had a deficit of £538k. As a result of the actuary's recommendations, contributions by the United Reformed Church were increased to 18.5% of basic salary from 1 January 2006.

NOTE 19 COMMITMENTS

At 31 December 2006 there were, in respect of the purchase of properties, commitments of £2,080k (2005: £1,178k), and contractual liabilities of £225k (2005: £nil). There were also commitments to make grants of £56k (2005 : £54k).

The Church is committed, through the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society and other earmarked funds, to providing housing for retired ministers. Owing to the many unknown variables which would be involved in calculating the value of this long term liability, no provision is included in the Balance Sheet. These variables include the number of ministers requiring assistance from the Society and the level of contributions able to be made by individual ministers towards the cost of their homes. During 2006 £2.9 million was spent on acquiring housing for retired ministers, £397k on repairing and maintaining existing properties and profits of £1.5 million were earned from the sale of homes no longer required. An exercise is currently being undertaken by the Society's management committee to collect information to enable more accurate long term planning, and future cash flow is kept under continuous review.

At 31 December 2006 there was an annual commitment under a non-cancellable lease as follows:

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
Expiry date:		
Over five years	6	6

NOTE 20 CASH FLOW INFORMATION

a) Reconciliation of net cash flow to movement in net cash funds

	2006 £'000	2005 £'000
(Decrease)/Increase in cash in the period	923	(184)
Cash inflow from decrease in liquid resources	(177)	7
Movement in net cash funds in the year	746	(177)
Net cash funds at 1 January	289	466
Net cash funds at 31 December	<u>1,035</u>	<u>289</u>

b) Analysis of net cash funds

	As at 1 January 2006 £'000	Cash flow £'000	As at 31 December 2006 £'000
Cash at bank and in hand	112	923	1,035
Liquid resources	<u>177</u>	<u>(177)</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>289</u>	<u>746</u>	<u>1,035</u>

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE TRUSTEE'S REPORT AND ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Finance Committee, on behalf of the Trustee, is responsible for ensuring that accounts are prepared for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly ('the Church') and of its financial activities during the year. In preparing those financial statements, the Finance Committee is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable United Kingdom accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue to operate.

The Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that proper accounting records are maintained which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Church and enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with generally accepted accounting practice. The Finance Committee, on behalf of the Trustee, is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The above statements are formal statements, which are included in the accounts of all companies and major charities.

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

We have audited the financial statements of the United Reformed Church for the year ended 31 December 2006 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the cash flow statement and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein.

Respective responsibilities of the Finance Committee and auditors

As set out in the Statement of Responsibilities the Finance Committee is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

We have been appointed auditors under section 43 of the Charities Act 1993 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 44 of that Act. Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. This report, including the opinion, has been prepared for and only for the Church, as a body, in accordance with paragraph 6(2) of the 1995 Regulations (as amended by the 2000 Regulations) made under Part VI, Charities Act 1993 and for no other purpose. We do not, in giving this opinion, accept or assume any responsibility for any other purpose or to any other person to whom this report is shown or into whose hands it may come save where expressly agreed by our prior consent in writing.

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 1993. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the Trustee's Report is not consistent with the financial statements, if the Church has not kept proper accounting records or if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We read other information contained in the Financial Report, and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. This other information comprises only the Report of the Finance Committee, Five Year Summary and Budget Comparisons. We consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements. Our responsibilities do not extend to any other information.

Basis of audit opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Finance Committee in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the circumstances of the Church, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT CONTINUED**Opinion**

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view, in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, of the state of affairs of the Church at 31 December 2006 and of its net incoming resources and cash flows for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Charities Act 1993.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors
London
17 May 2007

The audit report by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP set out on pages 25 & 26 is in the standard form used by auditors when there is nothing exceptional which they wish to draw to the attention of readers.

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY

	2002 £'000	2003 £'000	2004 £'000	2005 £'000	2,006 £'000
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS					
Income					
Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	18,687	19,312	19,691	19,932	20,199
Investment income	757	738	677	636	780
Grants receivable	694	566	601	678	683
Legacies	968	719	1,232	787	521
Donations	1,854	641	648	1,574	774
Other income	1,138	713	1,952	1,214	2,798
	24,098	22,689	24,801	24,821	25,755
Expenditure					
Ministry	16,354	16,555	17,088	16,932	17,766
Training	1,662	1,546	1,581	1,677	1,637
Mission	2,446	2,417	2,519	2,319	2,412
Governance	382	252	314	368	344
Support activities (incl.editorial and bookshop)	1,684	1,693	1,196	1,391	1,513
	22,529	22,463	22,698	22,686	23,672
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	1,569	226	2,103	2,135	2,083
Investment gains/(losses)	(3,009)	1,517	1,017	2,588	2,731
Actuarial gains/(losses)	(7,738)	(3,312)	942	(2,256)	(1,382)
Net increase/(decrease) in funds	(9,178)	(1,569)	4,062	2,467	3,432
Note: The classification of expenditure has changed significantly for the 2005 SORP. For this Summary, expenditure figures have been restated as far as is practicable to give a meaningful comparison.					
CASH FLOW STATEMENTS					
Cash required for investment in					
Houses for retired ministers	1,325	1,551	908	1,707	(7)
Other properties	(482)	3	(56)	7	(1,175)
Cars and equipment	118	70	101	177	113
Loans to churches and ministers	(115)	89	14	(216)	18
	846	1,715	967	1,675	(1,051)
Source of cash					
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year (see above)	1,569	226	2,103	2,135	2,083
Adjustment for items not resulting in a cash movement, for returns on investments, and for endowments	(1,703)	(14)	(2,208)	(1,038)	(3,053)
	(133)	212	(105)	1,097	(970)
Net increase in capital endowment	37	8	1	859	-
Net decrease in investments	1,815	140	762	(464)	842
Decrease/(increase) in bank balances	(872)	1,355	309	183	(923)
	846	1,715	967	1,675	(1,051)

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY CONTINUED

	2002 £'000	2003 £'000	2004 £'000	2005 £'000	2006 £'000
BALANCE SHEETS					
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets					
Houses for retired ministers	19,246	21,164	23,072	25,915	27,706
Houses for serving ministers	4,530	4,471	5,099	5,106	4,768
Other properties	2,249	2,210	2,321	2,300	2,249
Cars and equipment	357	303	283	337	334
	26,381	28,148	30,775	33,658	35,057
Long term investments (incl.programme-related)	15,489	16,861	17,110	20,154	22,219
Loans to churches and ministers	589	699	731	534	570
	42,460	45,708	48,616	54,346	57,846
Net current assets/(liabilities)					
Current assets					
Debtors and stock	1,054	1,286	1,377	1,336	1,116
Short term investments and deposits	159	164	170	177	-
Bank balances and money on call	1,960	605	296	112	1,035
less : current liabilities	3,174	2,055	1,843	1,625	2,151
	3,317	3,466	2,823	3,526	1,968
	(144)	(1,411)	(980)	(1,901)	183
Net assets excluding pension liability	42,317	44,297	47,636	52,445	58,029
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	(7,738)	(11,287)	(10,564)	(12,907)	(15,059)
Other pension obligations				(4,128)	(4,128)
Net assets including pension liability	34,579	33,010	37,072	35,410	38,842
Unrestricted income funds	3,889	1,236	4,085	2,910	2,877
Restricted income funds	25,057	25,813	26,784	24,759	27,172
Capital funds	5,633	5,961	6,203	7,741	8,793
Total funds	34,579	33,010	37,072	35,410	38,842

Note: Figures for 2002-2004 have not been restated in respect of Other pension obligations, because the relevant data is not available at those dates.

NON-FINANCIAL STATISTICS	(from URC Year Book)				
Members	88,000	85,000	82,000	79,000	76,000
Stipendiary ministers	695	677	665	648	676
Non-stipendiary ministers	161	153	138	137	134
Churches	1,719	1,698	1,691	1,655	1,630
Retired ministers	852	857	881	894	858
Ministry and Mission contribution per member	£212	£227	£240	£252	£266

Information on this page and the preceding page is aimed mainly at the analyst rather than at the casual reader. However, it shows some interesting trends and brings out features that do not show so clearly in a single set of accounts.

Information Papers

General Assembly 2007

3	Standing Orders
9	Reports from Colleges
21	Students sent by Synod
23	Statistics in Training
25	URC History Society
27	Musicians Guild
29	Women's World Day of Prayer
31	Silence and Retreats
33	Schools related to the United Reformed Church

1. The Agenda of the Assembly

- 1a. At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its Committees which include the Mission Council or by synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.
- 1b. The Assembly Arrangements Committee shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a draft order of business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.
- 1c. Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under rule 3b shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the Moderator on the advice of the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.
- 1d. If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.
- 1e. The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

2. Presentation of Business

- 2a. All reports of Committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be annually determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.
- 2b. A synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the annual meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.
- 2c. A local church or district council wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its synod for consideration and, if the synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the synod to comply with Standing Order 2b above. In the case of a local church the motion must be submitted to the synod through the district council.
- 2d. A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a synod or a district council through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly Arrangements Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.
- 2e. Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church, which may be made by the Mission Council or a Committee of the General Assembly or a synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all synod clerks of the proposed amendment.

3. Motions and Amendments

3a. A report presented to the Assembly by a Committee or synod, under rule 1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under rule 2d of a motion to refer back to that Committee or synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.

3b. During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a Committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. The Moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.

3c. No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder, except that motions presented on behalf of a Committee, of which printed notice has been given, do not need to be seconded.

3d. A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserves the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.

3e. It shall not be in order to move a motion or amendment which:

- (i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
- (ii) involves the church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
- (iii) pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
- (iv) amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two annual meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
- (v) is not related to the report of a Committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 2d.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of i, ii, iii, and v) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of iv) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

3f. An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 3k.

3g. If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected a further amendment not to the like effect may be moved.

3h. An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.

3i. The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.

Standing Orders

3j. A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.

3k. Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3f, 3g and 3h have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 6. (3.9.2b)

4. Timing of Speeches and of Other Business

4a. Save by prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly Committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed 5 minutes.

4b. Save by the prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly Committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular Committee or synod motion exceed 12 minutes, (e.g. a Committee with three motions may not exceed 36 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the officers of the Assembly or determined by the Moderator. Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed 5 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than 3 minutes.

4c. When a speech is made on behalf of a Committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.

4d. Secretaries of Committees and full-time Executive Secretaries who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a Committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convener concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.

4e. In each debate, whether on a motion or on an amendment, no one shall address the Assembly more than once, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matters. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.

4f. The foregoing Standing Order (4e) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.

5. Closure of Debate

5a. A member of Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion that the General Assembly, for the better consideration of a specified resolution and its related documents, goes into a committee of the whole Assembly. Provided that the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that this rule may appropriately be applied in the case of the said resolution, the motion shall be presented immediately following the opening speeches in support of the primary motion. For such a motion to be carried, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Committee procedure enables members to speak more than once and exploratory votes to be taken on particular points or suggested changes. The number and length of speeches shall be at the discretion of the Moderator. After discussion in committee and decision on any proposed changes the Clerk shall draw the attention of the Assembly to any changes to the original text which have been agreed.

The Moderator shall then declare the committee stage to be ended, and the Assembly shall proceed to hear a closing speech from the mover of the motion under discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion, subject to any further motion under Standing Order 5. The decision of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

5b. In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

5c. In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as "the closure motion". If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.

5d. During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be represented at the next Annual Meeting of the General Assembly.

Standing Orders

5e. The motions described in Standing Orders 5b, 5c and 5d above are exceptions to Standing Order 3c, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote. Precedence as between motions under 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other of them can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

6. Voting

6a. Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(l) and (2) of the Structure.

6b. Other motions before the Assembly shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except

- (i) if the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
- (ii) if the show of cards indicates by a very close vote, and the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees, then a paper ballot shall be the method of voting.

6c. To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the Moderator decides this is necessary, the Nominations Committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.

7. Questions

7a. A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convener of any Committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.

7b. A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.

7c. Questions asked under Standing Orders 7a and 7b shall be put and answered without discussion.

8. Points of Order, Personal Explanations, Dissent

8a. A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.

8b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

8c. The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.

8d. The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

9. Admission of Public and Press

Members of the public and representatives of the press shall be admitted to the Assembly unless the Assembly otherwise decides, and they shall occupy such places as are assigned to them.

10. Circulation of Documents

Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may be distributed within the building in which the Assembly is meeting.

11. Records of the Assembly

11a. A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly Arrangements Committee may determine.

11b. The minutes of each day's proceedings, in duplicated form, shall be circulated on the following day and normally, after any necessary correction, approved at the opening of the afternoon or evening session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.

11c. A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.

11d. As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each synod, district council and local church.

12. Suspension and Amendment of Standing Orders

12a. In any case of urgency or upon motion made on a notice duly given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting so far as regards any particular business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.

12b. Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments to the Standing Orders, which shall be subject to decision by the Assembly.



Westminster College

The wider United Reformed Church

1.1 The decision of the United Reformed Church Assembly in July 2006 to designate Westminster College one of its three Resource Centres enables the college to plan for the future with greater certainty. Already there have been consultations with governors and staff at the other two Centres to agree complementary ways of working in order to meet the requirements set out in the Training Review. There are continuing questions about the nature of provision for distant and dispersed learning throughout the Church, as well as in Cambridge, Manchester and Glasgow, which are being addressed with urgency.

1.2 We continue to build upon the changes in college management that were made by General Assembly in 1995, in the light of the recent decisions on training in the United Reformed Church. Westminster College is a registered charity with an object, modified by the United Reformed Church Act of 1972, to provide ministerial education for the United Reformed Church. Its trustees, the Board of Governors, are appointed by the United Reformed Church. However, the use which the Church makes of this valuable asset is restricted by the objects of the charity. In spite of these legal considerations we believe that the plans to extend the role of the college are eminently achievable, not least because the Church is the most significant contributor to the current revenue of the college. Westminster continues to be substantially committed to work with lay preachers, Training for Learning and Serving (TLS), continuing ministerial education, refresher courses, sabbaticals and the DMin programme we are running in collaboration with Princeton Theological Seminary. The popularity of our annual course for lay preachers led us to plan two for the year 2006, both of which were fully subscribed. We shall continue to build upon this response. Some of the TLS course to which we contribute take place at the college and we are glad to see some regular visitors who regard us as friends. Our staff and students take parts in the wider life of the Church, serving in a variety of voluntary tasks locally and nationally. The year saw a good intake of students in the first stage of training for ministry, giving a net increase in student numbers.

The Cambridge Theological Federation

2.1 Westminster College is not a stand-alone institution but a part of a significant ecumenical enterprise. For every minister in our own Church who is grateful for the teaching they received at Westminster College there are now two or three people ministering in other denominations who have an affectionate regard for our staff and whose memories of Cambridge are located in our classrooms and our library. Westminster College is not only the United Reformed Church's gateway into a rich ecumenical resource; it is a place where our contribution counts and is valued. What is true in Cambridge is true elsewhere. Theological education has become a significant expression of ecumenism in many parts of the country. It is not possible for any one denomination to take strategic decisions about theological education without the impact being felt by others. Those of us who serve the various institutions in Cambridge share a feeling of being at the mercy of denominational forces beyond our control. We also share a conviction that the grace of God will enable us to overcome our ecclesial and doctrinal differences.

2.2 Within the Federation we now offer a range of academic courses, validated by two universities. There are varieties of learning style and assessment. We can offer a course for those who come into residence in Cambridge, those who come on a part-time basis and those who live at a distance. We have programmes for graduates and for those who come having just secured the basic academic qualifications. The rapidly developing Regional Training Partnership, of which the Cambridge Theological Federation is a part, is enlarging educational opportunities. Although ministerial education remains the Federation's largest single activity we also offer learning opportunities for lay people. Most of our Federation students have experience of another career; a large number are married, with children; by contrast with even ten years ago there are roughly equal numbers of men and women.

2.3 Westminster College is one of the entry points for United Reformed Church students, and others who apply to the college and are accepted as students, to all this richness. Those who wish to follow our new BA in Christian Theology at Anglia Ruskin University, to graduate or diploma level, may enrol through Westminster, though students are normally assigned to the college through the United Reformed Church. The MA in Pastoral Theology is similarly available. Those who wish to follow the Cambridge University course leading to a degree of Bachelor of Theology in Ministry need to live in Cambridge and be linked to the university through Westminster. The new arrangements will make it possible, we believe, for all ministerial candidates to graduate in relevant disciplines. We believe that the Church is right to demand academic qualifications for the ministry of word and sacrament. We also believe that the Church should be seeking to develop those gifts and graces which are not subject to academic assessment but are discerned as we make our common pilgrimage.

The world Church

3. Our students continue to participate in programmes which take them beyond the United Kingdom. During the calendar year students visited the United States and Israel on church-related programmes. Staff have been to various parts of Europe and the United States. We have received visitors from the United States, New Zealand and different parts of Europe. Our new Lewis and Gibson scholar is from our partner church in Italy and we also received a Croatian pastor for a short stay. In the summer our DMin students travelled to New Jersey for their final summer school at the Princeton Theological Seminary before embarking on their dissertations. Changes at Princeton and the departure of Dr Peter McEnhill have led us to suspend recruitment for another course for the time being, with the intention of beginning again in 2008. The Federation opens up other parts of the world to us as visitors come to our partners in Cambridge. The college has a policy of expecting students to travel to at least one overseas placement during their course, not only to enjoy Christian hospitality but to see how the mission of the Church is practised in other cultures. We regard visits and visitors as an important part of Christian formation for our own ministry.

The buildings

4. We have commissioned and completed a major structural survey of the college. This not only assures us there are no major structural problems to address but provides an agenda for planned and costed maintenance over the next few years. We are fortunate in our Management Committee, both in terms of the expertise and imagination which is at the service of the college. We have retained the services of a specialist contractor to oversee and co-ordinate work on the building in order to ensure that it is properly specified and carried through efficiently. With the benefit of this preparatory work we are resuming our plans for further improvements in the facilities offered at the college. Our current programme includes raising lighting levels in the main corridor, increasing storage for records and improving gutters and drains. Our future plans include a new kitchen and new heating. At the same time we are trying to make environmental gains, by cutting power consumption and using renewable materials wherever possible.

The Library

5. We have completed cataloguing the United Reformed Church History Society collection and are half-way through cataloguing the rare books in the Carrie Room, which have not been included in the on-line catalogue up to this point. Those who are interested in browsing the catalogue on the web can do so through the University of Cambridge Library catalogue. The most convenient way of doing this is via the section called "Affiliated Institutions". This facility will add to the requests by scholars to visit our collections. *From Cambridge to Sinai* a selection of essays about our benefactors Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson was published in 2006 and a re-issue of the college history is anticipated this year. The college library remains one of the major resources of the whole Federation and is in much demand on a daily basis. Alongside this we provide a service for local churches researching their own history and for individuals. We make a modest charge to those seeking help with family history, to cover our costs. We are grateful for the continued work of Richard and Jean Potts in sorting and classifying archives of the Presbyterian Church of England. One of our building projects is to secure better storage space for this large collection. We continue to receive gifts of books from ministers' libraries, some of which are taken into the college library, while others are made available to current students.

Financial review and results for the year

6.1 The college income and expenditure accounts were kept in balance for the financial year to the end of 2006. This was after a provision had been made to carry forward that part of the maintenance budget for the year which had been committed but not paid over to contractors at the year end. The Governors noted that in a total budget income of £635,000 for the year, one half came by way of direct grant from the United Reformed Church in respect of education provided for its students and the other half from a variety of sources. There was a fall in conference income over the previous year. The increase in annual expenditure on maintenance was continued. Although no major visible changes to the college fabric were made during the year there was further expenditure on asbestos removal and improvements in the infrastructure, such as fire and security systems.

6.2 The Governors will continue to discuss financial policy with the United Reformed Church in the light of changing requirements. It is likely that the basis on which the college receives its fee income will be revised. The Governors are aware of the need to strike a balance between the needs of the United Reformed Church and the possibilities of generating additional income at the times the college resources are not in use by the Church.

Celebration

7. At our Commemoration of Benefactors in 2006 our preacher was Revd Keith Forecast, former Moderator of the General Assembly. Our lecture formed part of the series of Reid Lectures given by Professor Nancey Murphy of Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, under the title *Bodies and Souls – or Spirited Bodies*. We also give thanks for the gifts of our leavers, who were: William Bowman, (Elmers End and Emmanuel, West Wickham) Pauline Main and Samantha White (West Suffolk Group).

Staffing

8. Revd Dr Peter McEnhill left us at the end of the academic year 2006 after serving for ten years as our Doctrine teacher. Peter was also our Librarian, Director of the Institute of Reformed Studies and took responsibility for our computer network. We wish Peter well in his new post as Minister of Kilmacolm, Inverclyde. The Principal

has taken on temporary responsibility for the Library and the Institute of Reformed Studies, while Neil Thorogood is now the college Computer Officer. We were fortunate in securing the services of Dr Suzanne McDonald, a recent member of the college, to serve as a temporary lecturer for the academic year 2006-2007, covering the teaching of Doctrine and Reformed Studies. The College is delighted that the United Reformed Church has appointed Revd Dr Susan Durber to serve as Principal from September 2007. A further appointment to the teaching team is also planned.

The Principal

9. This year sees the retirement of the Revd Professor Stephen Orchard as Principal of the College. The time seems to have flown since January 2001 when Mission Council appointed him as Principal. Stephen came to Westminster as one of the last students to be trained at Cheshunt College before it joined with Westminster in 1967, with a considerable range of experience both as a minister in the United Reformed Church and in ecumenical service with the British Council of Churches and the Christian Education Movement. All this experience was valuable in his time at Westminster. The Cambridge Theological Federation was quick to appreciate his range of experience, and in the last two years he has been President of the Federation as well as Principal. His conduct of worship in college has made students aware of the depths of our tradition and his friendly style has made him readily approachable. The whole College community wish him and Linda well in their retirement, and congratulate him (and the General Assembly) on his election as Moderator for the year 2007-8.



Northern College

Life at Northern College

1.1 Last year's Assembly decision that Northern College would become one of two Resource Centres for Learning for the United Reformed Church in England ended a period of uncertainty for many involved in theological education, and enabled us to begin more active planning for the future. In the meantime, teaching at Luther King House continues in ecumenical partnership with the Baptist, Methodist and Unitarian colleges. Most of our Northern college students are studying for the diploma or degree in contextual theology, with some undertaking further theological study on the MA programme. In addition, all students undertake church and community placements throughout their course, allowing us to integrate theoretical and practical learning. This pattern of training requires two-three days a week in college for full-time students, and six residential weekends for those training on a part-time basis. The college time includes reflection on placement experience, group and personal tutorials, and community worship in addition to the academic programme, so always it is a busy and intensive period for both students and staff.

1.2 Those who are preparing for Church-related community work follow the weekend programme, with additional teaching and full-time community work placements; and this year, as last, the programme has been expanded by the presence of independent students who have chosen to follow the community work course.

1.3 For a long time we have been concerned that the library at Luther King House needs redevelopment, along with the provision of adequate space for our students as well as conference guests. A scheme has now been put in place to make this possible, and so redevelopment will be taking place on the site from April to August this year. Teaching will continue as normal, although much of the library will be housed in temporary accommodation, and the learning resources tutor is ensuring that as much of the stock as possible will be available.

Ecumenical developments

2.1 During this year the Southern Northwest Training Partnership was formed, in which Northern College, along with other colleges at Luther King House, the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church and Baptist Union joins the Manchester, Liverpool and Chester Anglican dioceses in offering part-time ministerial training across the region. This will begin in 2007, when part-time students and church-related community workers at Northern College will join the new foundation degree, Learning in Ministry and Mission, validated jointly by Chester and Liverpool Hope Universities. The course will be delivered through residential weekends and mid-week evening teaching at a number of centres, with e-learning tutorial groups adding to the residential weekend experience for those studying outside the region. In 2008 we hope to begin a new full-time degree programme which will enable interchangeability between the full and part time programmes, the creation of additional modules, and the development of a level three programme making it possible for students to progress from the foundation degree to a BA. Currently we are engaged in writing and developing new modules, as well as all the financial and structural negotiations involved in the setting-up of a new course. Both John Campbell, as Principal, and Roy Lowes, representing the wider denomination, are members of the Board of Directors of the new partnership.

A resource centre for the URC

3.1 Following last year's Assembly decision, we are seeking to discover the implications of being a resource centre for learning for the whole church. Our staff are currently involved in a variety of teaching and learning events, such as ministers' summer schools, courses at Windermere, and day events for synods and districts. In conjunction with colleagues at Westminster and the Scottish College, we are seeking to find ways of co-ordinating what we can offer to the churches, to make our resources as widely and effectively available as possible. We hope, with the help of the Education and Learning Committee, to carry out a similar exercise with Training and Development officers in synods, and have already established a principle of co-operation written into the job description of the new Yorkshire synod development officer. We continue to work extensively with churches in our own denomination, as well as ecumenically, in the provision of placements for students, and greatly value the support of churches in this form of partnership in training.

Living in a world church

4.1 We continue to value our links with the world church, and are grateful to the Council for World Mission and the Belonging to the World Church programme which makes possible the number of links and student visits which we enjoy. During this year one of our students had an eye-opening experience in South Africa where the magnitude of the spread of HIV/AIDS was overwhelming. Another spent time in the diocese of Amritsar, first in the city itself and then in the foothills of the Himalayas. This enabled her to experience the very practical nature of the witness of the church of North India and the support it gives to the Dalit community. CWM has continued to sponsor participants on our MA programme, and this year our group is enriched by the presence of experienced pastors and church leaders from South Africa and Madagascar.

And on into ministry...

5.1 Last summer saw several of our students called into pastorates, and others have taken up their ministry as the year has gone on. Murray George went into pastorate at Saffron Walden, and Jon Sermon at Chelmsford. After completing an MA in biblical studies in Sheffield, Gillian Heald commenced a part time pastorate in Gainsborough combined with further research. Lindsey Cottam was called as non-stipendiary minister in the Fylde and Wyre district, Sheila Coop is working with the Oldham town centre chaplaincy and a pastorate at Macedonia, Failsworth. Anne Bedford is a non-stipendiary minister at the pastorate of Hamilton Memorial, Upton and Prenton, including a hospital chaplaincy, and Vic Webb has been called to Wolverton, Milton Keynes. We have also seen three of our students commence Church Related Community Work – Rosie Buxton in Bettws, Newport, Alison Dalton at Poole, and Pat Oliver at Tonge Moor, Bolton. We wish them all well in their new appointments and future ministries.



Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College

The developing relationship

1.1 The decision of last year's General Assembly to affirm our college as one of the three Resource Centres for Learning recognised by the United Reformed Church set a clear context for a major aspect of the College's life and work. We have found the early meetings of the RCLs and with synod training officers positive experiences in terms of a common commitment, a willingness to share ideas and resources and positive steps to take forward the agenda of partnership. We anticipate eagerly participating in growing cooperation and collaboration.

1.2 The resolutions of last year, however, did not mark any significant change of direction, but rather a further enabling of our own commitment to developing more integrated learning for the people of God. For some time, we have been endeavouring to make provision that does not segment and separate but encourages learning together. The policy commitment is of course the easier part; it then brings considerable organisational, curricular and pedagogical challenges in terms of applying that commitment and philosophy. We are glad that almost all learning events within the college draw on a broad range of participants.

Working with the synod of Scotland

2.1 In relation to ministerial education (particularly EM1), the college acts as agent for the whole United Reformed Church, but it has a special relationship with the synod of Scotland. For nigh on 200 years, there has been a strong relationship between the college and the (former) union. As our understanding of the implications of our shared perspective on ministry as the action of the whole people of God has grown in more recent years, the commitment of the college to develop a wider learning programme has strengthened.

2.2 This has been expressed in a reciprocal and collaborative agreement between college and synod. The synod, in restructuring its organisation, has resolved to develop and deepen its relationship with the college. The college in its turn derives benefit from the cooperative commitment and from resources that are made available.

2.3 We are conscious however that the pattern of Resource Centres for Learning offers synods not simply an educational partner but also an entry point into the resources of each college, wherever situated, and we look forward to seeing and fostering the potential of this development.

Staffing

3.1 The Principal, The Revd Dr Jack Dyce, has been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Education of Glasgow University for a thesis entitled "*Menneske først og Christen så*: First a human being, then a Christian – a contribution from a 'grundtvigian' perspective to the development of a more 'folk' lay theological education in Scotland".

3.2 The College has partnered with Morningside United Church (Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church) in Edinburgh in an application for a special category ministry post which would create a ministry resource focused on ministry with older

people. This would build on work being done in that church and parish, particularly with the frail elderly, and in the college around the spirituality of older people, ministry with older people and educational gerontology. If approved in its submitted form, the post would make available 0.2 full time equivalent staffing within the college dedicated to education and training in this specialism.

3.3 Our college is very small in terms of staffing and yet undertakes an extensive range of responsibilities, including those which are otherwise undertaken by training officers in other synods. Our ability to utilise the theological resources in the Scottish universities and to draw on the knowledge and skills of people within the United Reformed Church synod and ecumenically does allow us to offer more than internally we could manage alone and at the same time provides the flexibility of not being bound to fixed staffing specialisms. We are conscious nonetheless that much strategic development may be contingent upon resourcing additional personnel.

Educational provision

4.1 In the course of the last academic year, we have offered longer courses on for example Renewing Rites, Doing Bible Study Differently, Reformation studies, and introduction to New Testament Greek and Conflict Transformation.

4.2 The retreats programme has included day events for Ash Wednesday, National Poetry Day and All Souls' Day and on the story of Ruth, the hymns of Charles Wesley, musical requiems and the parable of the Prodigal Son.

4.3 The establishment of a once each term book reading club has attracted a number of participants and hopefully earned itself a place in the annual programme. Texts discussed have included McGrath's *The Order of Things*, Joan Bakewell's *Faith* and James Robertson's novel *The Testament of Gideon Mack*.

4.4 The tour of talks on the life and work of Hans Christian Andersen is being followed with a series on the *Seven Deadly Sins*. As well as their intrinsic value, the programme brings the college into contact with a wider range of people in a variety of church groups.

4.5 At present, the university partner for ordinands currently in training is the University of Edinburgh. We have regular conversation with university staff members to ensure that its provision in terms of curriculum and learning approaches meets the needs of our students. We are glad that Dr Cecilia Clegg, a member of the faculty at Edinburgh with considerable experience in the fields of conflict transformation and in inter-community dialogue, has agreed to be the speaker at our annual service in June 2007.

Ecumenical engagements

5.1 The ACTS group on learning in first years of ministry has extended its remit and now is concerned with conversations around the broader field of learning for and in ministry.

5.2 The ecumenical lay learning group began as an informal grouping of adult educators within the churches but has in the last year established itself as a regular meeting place of staff with responsibility for adult learning.

5.3 We are pleased to report that there has been some expression of interest from within the Church of Scotland and perhaps more widely in the establishment of the United Reformed Church's TLS programme in Scotland. There has been something of a gap in adult lay theological education in Scotland since the demise of the Scottish Churches' Open College. We look forward to the conversations around exploring this possibility.

Reports from Colleges

5.4 The Church of Scotland is in the process of creating (and will by the time of their and the United Reformed Church General Assemblies this summer have inaugurated) a website *Resourcing Churches*. This site will be an internet space with details of events, access to learning resources and information on people with specific areas of knowledge and skill.

5.5 The conversations that have followed on from the SCIFU discussions involving the Episcopal, Methodist and United Reformed Churches in Scotland have identified collaboration in adult learning as an area of potential development.

5.6 With the ending of Scottish Churches' Open College, the joint library continued with the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College as partners. When the Church of Scotland withdrew, the other partners continued for some time to make joint provision, but serious issues of viability arose. The remaining two entered into agreement with the International Christian College in Glasgow for the provision of library services and this has been operating very satisfactorily, particularly in the light of ICC's commitment to broaden its holdings and through the considerable assistance of their librarian there. There continues to be a stock of books jointly owned by SEC and ourselves but held in storage as not incorporated within the ICC library. Conversations between the parties and with potential partners are likely now to lead to a dissolution of the original agreement and the two parties making separate arrangements for the use of the remnant stock. There is of course considerable regret that a collaborative library provision that was a part of a brave ecumenical commitment to shared provision in adult learning is now coming to an end. We express that sadness but with a hope that already new forms of ecumenical conversation and collaboration are emerging.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John'.

Mansfield College Oxford Ministerial Training Course

1. Last year's General Assembly voted to discontinue using Mansfield College as an institution at which future United Reformed Church ordinands could receive initial ministerial training. While not being welcomed by staff and ordinands; this decision was not unexpected. We are now in the process of running down the ministerial training course, with five ordinands this academic year, three next year, and one the year following that.

2. Despite having no new intake of ordinands, morale is buoyant. There is a high level of commitment from ordinands to their training, to the community and to corporate worship. The present ordinands are making the most of the many and varied opportunities that training for the Ministry in Oxford affords; their only regret that future United Reformed Church ordinands will be denied these opportunities. Richard Howard completed his course and in September was ordained and inducted as minister of Hoole and Farndon URC, Chester. Two final-year ordinands, Caroline Vodden and Lesley Moseley, have both received and accepted calls to pastorate ministry and we look forward to their ordinations and inductions. Jenny Mills and Timothy Searle have one further year of training to complete, and Iain McLaren two more years. We had an Erasmus student from Bern with us for one term. This Bern-Oxford exchange looks likely to be discontinued, as we can no longer provide a resident ordinand community in Oxford large enough to support these Swiss visitors. The small and close-knit community of ordinands and staff was shocked and deeply affected by the death of Caroline Vodden's young son in December and is doing all it can to support Caroline and her family in their grief and readjustment. We are grateful to Erna Stevenson who, as Chaplin to Ordinands, offers part-time pastoral ministry. The Baptist staff and students for the ministry at Regent's Park College continue to be supportive and provide counterparts and teachers for our combined pastoral studies programme.

3. Walter Houston is in his final year as Director of the ministerial training course prior to retirement. He has continued to provide strong leadership, wise counsel, inspirational teaching and rigorous scholarship. We were pleased to celebrate the launch of his new book, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and theologies of social justice in the Old Testament*. Julian Templeton, the Assistant Director, continues to teach on the pastoral studies programme, to oversee placements and to do a small amount of tutoring in doctrine and liturgy. He was Acting Director of Ministerial Training during Hilary Spring Term when Walter was on sabbatical. John Muddiman continues to tutor ordinands in New Testament, and Peggy Morgan tutors ordinands in the study of Religion. On the governance side, the Principal, Dr Diana Walford, continues to support the ministerial training course, and John Proctor provides strong, thoughtful and able chairmanship of the Ministerial Education and Training Committee (METC).

4. The college continues to admit students on a full-time or part-time basis for the MTh in Applied Theology. This is suitable as an in-service course for ministers and CRCW's at EM3 level. At the time of writing, Gerald Moule is the sole United Reformed Church minister taking this course, though we have other students from overseas. The University of Oxford admits research students in theology for the MPhil and DPhil both full-time residential and part-time non-residential. We welcome United Reformed Church ministers and others to join the college to study for these as well as for the MTh.

Reports from Colleges

5. In addition to agreeing to discontinue using Mansfield College as an institution for initial ministerial training, last year's General Assembly also agreed the following resolution: 'General Assembly, mindful of the past contribution of Mansfield College to ministerial education and the advancement of theological learning among Congregational and Reformed Churches in this country and worldwide; recognising the College's desire to continue to be of service to the Church in the educational field; and appreciative of resources of personnel and learning materials available there and in Oxford University; encourages the Training Committee to continue its discussions with the College to identify and implement appropriate ways of enabling it to make a distinctive contribution to the educational work of the United Reformed Church.' The ministerial training course staff and METC realised that such is the current drop in ministerial vocations, there would have been little effect in opposing last year's substantive resolution to rationalise initial ministerial training. However, the preceding resolution had the intention of enabling the considerable resources of the college and of Oxford University still to be of service to the United Reformed Church. We were very disappointed, then, when the United Reformed Church Training Committee decided not to part-fund a well thought-out proposal, which we had been exploring with them for over a year. This was for a part-time national research coordinator for the United Reformed Church, which would have been combined with a part-time college chaplaincy at Mansfield. Despite this setback the METC remains open to further conversations with the Training Committee. We hope, as General Assembly hoped, that Mansfield College will long continue to make a distinctive contribution to the educational work of the United Reformed Church.

6. As the ministerial training course is gradually run down we would appreciate your prayers for ordinands and staff as they endeavour to maintain course quality, commitment and community with fewer people. Pray also for the wider life of the college, for its nearly 300 students and staff reading and tutoring a wide range of subjects, that the spirit of open-minded inquiry would continue to shape and enrich individuals and communities. Finally, pray for the Governing Body as it seeks to appoint a new Chaplain; that the worship of God and witness to the gospel would continue to be offered regularly in accordance with the college's constitution and the intention of its Congregational founders.



The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education

1. The decision of the General Assembly in 2006 not to use Queen's for ordination training has cast a shadow over what has otherwise been a year full of innovation and creativity. Much has changed to the life of Queen's because of the inauguration of the Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies (SOCMS), the successor body to the United College of the Ascension. This College on the Selly Oak campus in Birmingham closed in 2006 but most of its work has been continued on the Queen's campus. Four new members of staff, drawn from the world wide church, have begun work; 12 experienced and senior ministers and lay people from 8 countries and two continents are studying a new MA in Mission and Leadership Formation; 7 mission partners from Britain (together with their families) are preparing to serve in the wider world church. Their presence has enriched the experience of ordinands at Queen's, has deepened and enlivened an international and multi-cultural community, and has given a sharp mission focus to theological education and ministerial training within a global context.

2. In this context of a vibrant, growing and diverse community, the decision last year of General Assembly to withdraw ordination training from Queen's continues to be a disappointment. So too has been the outcome of discussions with the Training Committee about the ways in which the United Reformed Church will continue to value and relate to Queen's. The message last year sounded up-beat with what looked like firm intentions to shape new and mutually beneficial partnerships that would complement the provision at the two designated colleges. Sadly, a proposal from Queen's to enable the specialist resources of the Foundation in mission and ministry in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic contexts has not been accepted. There have been no proposals from the Training Committee that go beyond encouraging Queen's in our relationship with the West Midlands Synod and to be part of the emerging RTP. While we value our relationship with the Synod, and are glad to be a lead partner in the RTP, this response falls a long way short of the current position of the United Reformed Church as a sponsoring body, and leaves unanswered many questions about the current role of the United Reformed Church in the governance of the Foundation. We continue to be disappointed and frustrated by this, but do not see grounds for hope that this will change.

3. Nonetheless, the Foundation is a lively and invigorating place. We are encouraged by the way the two main sponsoring churches are indicating their commitment to Queen's to train both full and part-time ordinands. We are greatly encouraged by the discussions taking place with Black Majority Churches and their desire to use Queen's in the training and education of their pastors and lay leaders. We are glad that the three United Reformed Church ordinands are keen to continue their training at Queen's. We welcome the number of United Reformed Church ministers who are currently doing post-graduate work in the Foundation through the Graduate and Research Centre through independent efforts and contacts.

4. Staff research and publications continue in the course of the busy life of the Foundation, including: **Stephen Burns**: *Liturgy* (London: SCM, 2006); *Worship in Context* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2006); *Embracing the Day* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2006); *Living the Eucharist* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2006). **Andrew Chandler**, *History of the Church Commissioners*, (Boydell Press: 2006). **Paula Gooder**: *Only the Third Heaven* (London: Continuum, 2006); *Trito-Isaiah* (Birmingham: BRF, 2006). **John Hull**, *Mission Shaped Church: a theological response* (London: SCM, 2006). **Anthony Reddie & Michael Jagessar (eds)**, *Postcolonial Black British Theology: Textures and Themes* (Epworth, 2006) and *Black British Theology: A Reader* (Equinox, 2006). **Anthony Reddie**: *Dramatizing Theology* (Equinox, 2006) and *Black Theology in Transatlantic Dialogue* (Palgrave, 2006). **Nicola Slee**: 'The Public Role of Poetry', *Audenshaw Papers*, 2006; with Rosie Miles, *Doing Christmas Differently* (Glasgow: Wild Goose, 2006); *Words for Today* (IBRA, 2006). **Clive Marsh**, *Theology Goes to the Movies: An Introduction to Critical Christian Thinking* (London: Routledge, 2007). **John Joshua Raja**, *Controversies in Theology and Media: Searching God in the Media Market* (London: SCM, 2007).

Students sent by Synods

General Assembly 2007

(Information as of February 2007)

Northern

Stipendiary

Liz Jewitt (NEOC)

Non-Stipendiary

Stan May (Synod Placement)
Alison Mills (NEOC)
Helen Weatherley (NEOC)

CRCW-in-Training

Ann Honey (Northern)

North Western

Stipendiary

Mark Bates (Northern)
Philip Brooks (Northern)
Alan Crump (Northern)
Michele Jarmany (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Michael Aspinall (Northern)
Doreen Goodship (Northern)

Mersey

Stipendiary

Caroline Andrews (Northern)
Hilary Bell (Northern)
Jeff Hughes (Northern)
Stuart Radcliffe (Northern)
Carolyn White (Northern)

Yorkshire

Stipendiary

Philip Baiden (Northern)
Ashley Evans (Northern)
Annette Haigh (Northern)
Rosalind Selby (Northern)

East Midlands

Stipendiary

Debbie Brown (Northern)
Janet Hopewell (Westminster)
Jenny Mills (Mansfield)
Lesley Moseley (Mansfield)
Elizabeth Thomson (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Julian Sanders (EMMTC)

West Midlands

Stipendiary

Helen Carr (Queens)
Kim Plumpton (Westminster)
Timothy Mullings (Northern)
Ann Sheldon (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Robert Maloney (Northern)

Eastern

Stipendiary

Mark Bish (Westminster)
Claire Gouldthorp (Queens)
Kate Hackett (Westminster)
Andrew Mann (Queens)
Matthew Stone (Westminster)
James Taylor (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Don Nichols (Synod Placement)
Mary Playford (Westminster)
Andrew Royal (ERMC)

CRCW-in-Training

Liz Kam (Northern)
Mark Tubby (Northern)

South Western

Stipendiary

Paul Ellis (SWMTC)
Timothy Searle (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Sue Cossey (STETS)

Wessex

Stipendiary

Helen Higgin-Botham (Westminster)
Hilary Nabarro (Westminster)
Andrew Hall (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

John Lee (STETS)
Mark Meatcher (STETS)
Wendy White (STETS)

Thames North

Stipendiary

Lucy Berry (Northern)
Heather Cadoux (Westminster)
Anne Dove (Westminster)
Sohail Ejaz (Westminster)
Dominic Grant (Westminster)
Shirley Knibbs (Westminster)
Peter Little (Westminster)
Sue McCoan (Westminster)
Iain McLaren (Mansfield)
Findelvh McMahon (Westminster)
Graham Tarn (Westminster)

CRCW-in-Training

Karen Campbell (Northern)

Southern

Stipendiary

Romilly Micklem (Westminster)
Caroline Vodden (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Ian Gow (SEITE)
Diane Farquhar (Synod Placement)
Bernard Fidder (STETS)
Rosemary Shirley (STETS)
Darryl Sinclair (STETS)
Wendy Swan (SEITE)

Scotland

Stipendiary

Zam Walker (SC & URC)



Statistics of Students in Training

ERMC	Eastern Region Ministry Course
EMMTC	East Midlands Ministry Training Course
NEOC	North East Ordination Course
SC & URC	Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College
SEITE	South East Institute for Theological Education
STETS	Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
SWMTC	South West Ministry Training Course
SWOC	South Wales Ordination Course
WMMTC	West Midlands Ministry Training Course

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Feb 2004	Feb 2005	Feb 2006	Feb 2007	2007	2008	2009	2010
STIPENDIARY								
Full-Time Courses								
Mansfield College	8	6	6	5	2	2	1	
Northern College	22	16	17	14	6	4	2	2
Queen's College	4	6	6	3		1	1	1
SC & URC	2	4	4	1	1			
Westminster College	20	18	14	20	5	6	2	7
Part-time Courses								
EMMTC	2							
NEOC	1	1	1	1	1			
Northern College				3		1		2
STETS	1	1	1					
SC & URC	1							
SWMTC	2	2	2	1		1		
Subtotal	63	54	51	48	15	15	6	12
CRCW								
Northern College	5	5	6	4		2	2	
NON-STIPENDIARY								
Part-Time Courses								
ERMC	2	2	2	1			1	
EMMTC	1	1		1				1
Northern College	8	5	7	3	1		1	1
NEOC	2	1	2	2			1	1
SEITE	2	3	3	2		2		
STETS	8	6	5	7		1	2	4
SWOC	1							
SWMTC	1	1						
Synod	3		1	3	3			
Westminster College			1	1			1	
WMMTC	1							
Full-Time Courses								
Westminster College	2							
Subtotal	31	19	21	20	4	3	6	7
GRAND TOTAL	99	78	78	72	20	20	14	19

1. The Annual Lecture for 2006 was given by the serving President of the Ecclesiastical History Society, Professor David Bebbington, (University of Stirling). His subject, 'The Congregational Members of Parliament in the nineteenth century' attracted members and Cambridge academics to Westminster College on 23 September. His forensic analysis was balanced by personal vignettes, which amused and enlightened his audience, and when this is published, alongside a comprehensive database, it should prove a valuable resource tool for those working in the field. In addition to the lecture, College artefacts were on display and a party also toured the Faculty of Divinity, one of the more architecturally distinguished buildings in the University.
2. Visiting researchers have investigated an eclectic range of topics from 17th century eschatology to Moravian influences on William Blake, and have made their journeys from Poland, Malawi and Taiwan (where an interpreter was in attendance). The Administrator continued to liaise with the General Secretary about denominational committee records, and to act as clerk for the group of interested United Reformed Church members who are committed to marking the jubilee of the Pulpit and Table Fellowship Covenant with the Pfalz Church (1957-2007).
3. Dr Marian Foster completed her work as cataloguer of the library, with the grateful thanks of the Council. A shelf check was then instituted, the total collection amounting to five thousand entries. Mr and Mrs Richard Potts have continued to provide valuable assistance in the archives.
4. Enquiries to the Administrator proved as varied as ever. Family historians were to the forefront, but the value of the Society's location within Westminster was illustrated in one particular instance: letters concerned with evacuees at the beginning of the Second World War, and deposited with the Cambridgeshire Record Office after being bought at auction, allowed cross referencing between the College's records, the Society's ministerial listings and the Save the Children Fund in the USA.
5. Professor Clyde Binfield's editorial notes for the *Journal* in June commented on the essential untidiness of church history, but the articles made for an excellent *pot pourri*, as 'family' matters in a Congregational sense were covered by an examination of cross border cooperation in the North Wales Congregational Union, and in another article centred on R S Hudson, the soap manufacturer, one of that Union's chairmen. The 'bigger picture' encompassed Christian Philanthropy in London (1830-1850) and the so-called religious revival of the 1950s. It also proved possible to publish a supplement by the Revd Dr W D McNaughton, *Early Independency in Orkney*, thanks to contributions from two Trusts and the Society's own publications fund.
6. At the General Assembly in Exeter a lunch-time meeting to discuss the preservation of District Council and Synod records in the light of the proposed new structures was well attended. The speakers, Stephen Orchard, David Thompson and Kirsty Thorpe agreed to produce an article for *Reform* to alert a wider audience and also to send that advice to Synod Offices.
7. As a consequence of gaining charitable status in 2005, members were asked to consider Gift Aid authorisation when renewing their subscriptions – the majority were happy to do this.
8. Membership of the Society costs £15 a year, with a reduction for students. Full details may be obtained from Mrs M Thompson, Westminster College, Cambridge CB3 0AA (tel: 01223 741300 / email: mt212@cam.ac.uk).

E J Brown Hon Secretary

1.1 Guild members in our most active branches have shared in a wonderful variety of musical days out during 2006.

1.2 At Chelmsford in March, over 60 people were led in choral workshops in improving singing techniques ranging from how to stand, how to breathe, maintenance of pitch and improvement of sound quality. Members then divided into very small groups. Each group was given a brief text and sent into different rooms to practice improvising in African style before returning to present their efforts to critical acclaim. What amazing sounds were produced! Lastly, members were taught a setting of Psalm 148 by watching a leader 'conduct' in a very different way and with words written at the front of the church. There was no sheet music to get buried in – instead everybody's heads were up and a strong and confident sound resulted.

1.3 At Exeter, also in March, members once again enjoyed a choral workshop in traditional western European style before being introduced to Russian Orthodox church music.

1.4 At the other end of England, near Newcastle, a 25-piece gospel praise band from Gosforth led members of our Northeast Branch in a morning of worship songs before the local choir encouraged the learning of music from the Taizé community. Another exciting contrast in styles of worship to learn and be inspired by!

1.5 Many members of the Guild are organists and at Nantwich in April, members heard about the history of one of the great organ-building families and also of plans to move an organ from a church in Wales. This has been made possible only with a substantial grant – not just for the organ but for the training of music teachers and young musicians.

1.6 Organists in our Southern & Wessex branch were treated to a day of delights when they visited Christ's Hospital School at Horsham in Sussex. The school has no less than three very different organs: Each was demonstrated and played by the school's organist and by pupils. Guild members then moved to Horsham URC in the afternoon for a fourth organ and a service of worship to round off the day.

1.7 At Coventry in May, a small group of members were gently cajoled into giving of their best in singing music for Ascension and Pentecost, two important Christian festivals that are often overshadowed by Easter. Singing in small choirs can be nerve-wracking but a day like this gives confidence in sight reading and coming in on cue – and on the right note!

1.8 In September, and in the far south-east, a visit to the workshops of F H Browne & Sons at Ash near Canterbury provided an opportunity for those who play at an organ console to find out about the insides of an instrument. All sorts of bits were laid out, their relationships explained and various ways of 'voicing' an organ described. In complete contrast in the afternoon, members shared in music-making and Christian fellowship with the Salvation Army Band.

1.9 Finally, in October at Sir Titus Salt's church at Saltaire near Bradford, members at our Celebration Day were put through our choral paces by Andrew Teague, Director of Music at Bradford Cathedral. We learned special music which was sung later in the afternoon. We were also given a recital on the newly restored organ by Andrew and Michael Fletcher, organist at Saltaire.

1.10 So, this is the variety of our events arranged all over the country by branches in the Musicians' Guild. There is something for everyone, whether you play an instrument (and it doesn't have to be the organ!), sing Gospel, Bach or Bell or just love the sound of all kinds of music made for the worship of God in church. If you think you would like to come along to branch meetings (and branches get to all sorts of places), please get in touch with the Guild and find out more about us. There must be at least one person in every United Reformed Church concerned with the music during worship on Sundays – hopefully more – and we would love to hear from you!

1.11 For further information about the Guild, please visit our website at www.urcmusic.org.uk or contact our Secretary, Mrs Chris James, 56 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Herts SG7 5PE. Tel: 01462 742684.



1.1 On Friday, 2nd March over 3 million people took part in the annual Day of Prayer that circles the globe from the time the sun rises over the island of Tonga until it finally sets off the coast of the islands of Western Samoa. The central act of worship was a service using material prepared by Christian women in Paraguay. There were services in over 170 countries and islands worldwide; in the British Isles alone there were over 6000 services in cities, towns and villages, bringing together women, men and young people from every background and a very wide range of Christian traditions.

1.2 The theme "United Under God's Tent" also reflected the intention of the Women's World Day of Prayer that people are united internationally and between denominations, not just on the day but in the extensive preparations that are necessary beforehand. The motto of the WWDP '*Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action*' encourages us to have a continuing relationship in prayer and service with our sisters in many countries and in our own neighbourhoods.

1.3 Paraguay is a landlocked country in the heart of South America, bordered by Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia. It has had a turbulent history with two major wars caused by land and border issues. In the first (1865) the country lost 55,000 square miles of territory and 80% of the male population died, halving the population and almost completely destroying Paraguay. Successive dictatorships ruled the country until a coup in 1989 brought a return to democracy, though recovery has been slow and corruption is rife. There is a large gap between the rich and the poor with 10% of the population owning 60% of the land and receiving 40% of the income. Paraguay is one of the poorest countries: one in four is poor and the poorest 40% do not have enough to eat. The most impoverished are the indigenous population, the Guarani. Deforestation and the forced removal of the Guarani tribes from their land by powerful companies have created major problems. Yet despite its many problems there are signs of hope; the population is young and full of enthusiasm and zest for life. The majority of churches are involved in volunteer work with social projects to improve the quality of life for the people. The WWDP has been involved in funding programmes among women and children.

1.4 Against this background Christian women of Paraguay had written the service using two passages of Scripture, namely Genesis 18: 1-15 and Ephesians 4: 1-16. The Lord renews his promise that Sarah will have a son, but her laughter in disbelief prompts the crucial question "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" We reflected how we could live out our special role where God had placed us and prayed for forgiveness for setting our own priorities. In Ephesians Paul exhorts the Christian believers to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace". We were reminded that love is the perfect link that holds together the body of Christ, and that the gifts that we had received from God were given that we might serve one another in the church community and in the world where we live and work. A new Paraguayan song reassured us that

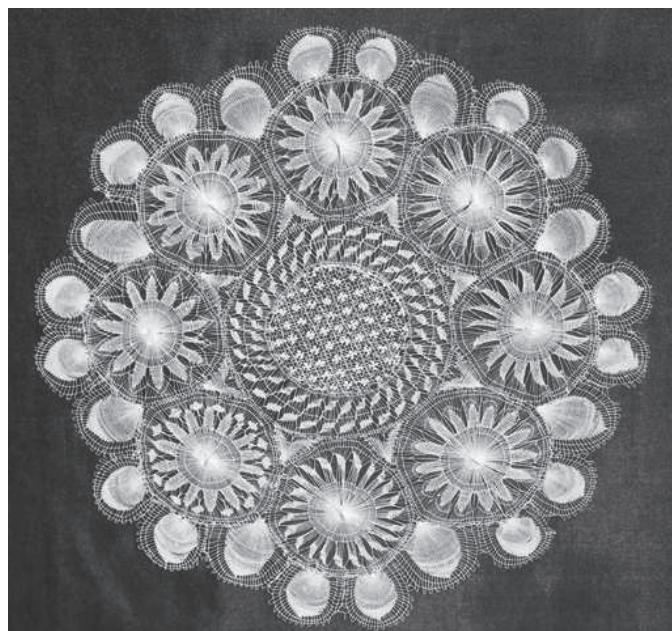
"We're united in Jesus, we're united. Like a family, we're united.
We have one God, one Holy Lord.
We have one faith, only one Love. Just one baptism, one Holy
Spirit, one Comforter sent from God above".

1.5 The Service featured Paraguay's most favourite handicraft, the Ñandutí or 'spider's web' lace: a fine, intricate woven lace with circular patterns, representing different aspects of Paraguayan life, skilfully joined together by one thread to form the whole. It reminded us that we are all different: whatever our problems or hardships, if we work together joined and supported by the thread of love we are 'United Under God's Tent'.

1.6 In April, May and June this year the WWDP celebrated the 75th anniversary of the first service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with services in London (City Temple, where the first service was held), Bristol and Leeds, using the theme "Holding Fast in Prayer". The service included video clips through the years, dance groups and prayer drama with coloured candles and materials representing the different continents which were attached to an uplifted cross. Some 1,500 people attended the celebrations.

1.7 Further information about the WWDP may be obtained from the web site: www.wwdp-natcomm.org or the office at Commercial Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2RR, Telephone 01892 541411.

Eileen Rhodes



Eileen Rhodes

1.1 Last year we noted that changes were about to take place. As with many aspects of church life, the changes are taking place slowly and perhaps we might say that this year has been a time of exploring possibilities rather than setting definite agendas. Like the people involved with the 'Catch the Vision' process, we are still convinced that many people in the church and outside the church are seeking something more in their lives, but often feel that the church is not meeting those needs.

1.2 During the Annual Meeting and retreat at Windermere in 2006 we decided to be actively involved in the exploratory stage of a process to discern whether some form of committed Prayer Fellowship to enable people to deepen their own prayer lives might be created. This resulted in the first national conference held in November 2006 at Ditchingham. The conference was entitled 'Transforming Prayer' and was attended by some 50 people.

1.3 Our time together was structured around a series of explorations followed by time for reflection. The first of these was order. We need good habits which became instinctive, and trust in God, leaving us with questions about our spiritual habits, the balance in our own lives and the ordering of discipleship needed to fulfil vows of church membership. We reflected on the importance of companions on the journey. Did we have companions? If so, what did it mean? If not, would it help? Were we willing to be companions for others? We pondered the roots of hospitality in the possibilities for openness and encounter afforded by the space and room God gives. We approached wilderness as the place where we feel least in control and most at threat is where we may most meet with God.

We were invited to understand stillness not as dependent upon silence, solitude or contemplative techniques but rather on awareness, openness, attentiveness, opportunity and gift. We opened up the theme of transformation, so compelling for a change-obsessed culture and how we might be agents of transformation.

Group reflection on the future on the final morning highlighted the need for sharing of good practice in developing prayer and exploring spirituality, for teaching of ways of praying, for networking, support, sustainability and accountability, and for acknowledging and rejoicing in the multi-facetedness of which we had become aware. Some left affirmed in their own personal pilgrimage, others left committed afresh to the Silence and Retreats Network (though we are still pondering a possible new name), and some were keen to explore a different network dedicated to prayer for mission.

1.4 Another similar conference has been booked at Swanwick in January 2008 and further details of this will be available soon.

1.5 *Windows* has taken on a new format under its new Editor which has met with very positive comments.

1.6 Exciting times are still ahead, so look out for news of the conference and perhaps for a changed name for this network in the future. New members are always welcome and the Convener is always interested to receive your news and comments.



Schools related to the United Reformed Church

General Assembly 2007

1. Representatives of the Schools met for their annual meeting in London on 5 June 2006. Among items for discussion were overseas links and a meeting in Taizé.

2. While the Milton Mount Foundation is currently able to provide aid only in exceptional circumstances, the Schools are grateful to the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust which has approved a further grant for each of the three years starting in July 2007.

3. The Schools remain conscious of the distinctive and testing trust left to them by their founders and are privileged to respond to that trust in constantly changing times. They value the continuing interest of the churches and missionary agencies which brought them into being.

4. Caterham School

4.1 The past year has been a very busy and rewarding one for everyone at the school.

4.2 We have had excellent examination results. At A-Level, 53% of the grades were A (up from 50% last year), 35% of pupils achieved straight A's compared to 22% in 2005, over 90% of pupils went to their first choice university (vs 85% last year), 79% of pupils accepted places at the 'Top Tier' Universities (vs 66% last year), and thirteen pupils accepted places at Oxford or Cambridge.

4.3 We did well at GCSE too with 99% of pupils achieving A*-C and 91% achieving A*-B.

4.4 As a day and boarding school, we have to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In fact, we have nearly forty which means that we need real commitment from the staff, which they provide with great enthusiasm. The Combined Cadet Force is thriving with over 100 cadets and the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme goes from strength to strength. We had some spectacular events performed by pupils. *Les Misérables* achieved standing ovations on both nights and the Monsters of Rock concert packed them in too. One of the outstanding trips that we organised was a trek across the ice fields in Iceland for Sixth Form pupils. This stretched them to the limit and they came through wonderfully.

4.5 In sports we had some good and some very good results. We had a very good season at hockey due to the new coach and to some talented players. We are very optimistic about the fact that the rugby U16 XV have just completed an undefeated season, the girls U16 netball team are currently undefeated and the U12 Lacrosse team won the Baston Rose Bowl. All of this bodes well for future results. I can also report that our chess team are playing well. They were undefeated in 2005/06 and were promoted to the next league.

4.6 Our new £6.5m science block – and new refectory – has just opened, which emphasises the success of our science department. This year we received three awards from the *Good Schools Guide* for Biology, Physics, and Art and Design.

4.7 We are the first Independent School in the country to be awarded 'Edward De Bono Thinking School' status. The school is now officially recognised as a centre of excellence for good thinking and will be involved in training other schools in thinking techniques such as the

Schools related to the United Reformed Church

Six Thinking Hats. Dr De Bono is one of the world's leading authorities on thinking and has worked with schools and multinational corporations across the world.

4.8 We have also been awarded Investor in People Status.

4.9 It has been a busy year. The coming one promises to be very similar and we hope for similar or better successes.

5. Eltham College

5.1 As well as enjoying a particularly successful year academically, Eltham College achieved excellent standards in extra-curricular terms. The Senior Production was this year the musical *Chess*, which performed to three sell-out performances and received a great deal of praise. *Animal Farm* (Middle), *Ordinary Jack* (Lower), four Year 7 plays, and the examination pieces at A, AS, and GCSE levels were evidence of many pupils' involvement in drama. Musically, the Brahms German Requiem, two Jazz Evenings and ECCO Pops were a clear indication of how well the musicians at Eltham are thriving. For many, especially for those taking part, the musical highlight was the choir tour to New York and Boston: singing at services just off Times Square, Broadway, and at St Paul's Chapel, Ground Zero, in New York were all moving in their different ways. In Boston, the choir received standing ovations in two down-town concerts, but perhaps singing a service of Compline in Harvard Memorial Chapel was the most memorable.

5.2 Pupils enjoyed considerable opportunities for travel and adventure: the Year 9 French exchange to Laval celebrated twenty-five years with events/meals at Eltham as well as Laval, and the trips to Minden and Nuremberg in Germany and a language trip to Spain, as well as cultural trips to Berlin, Brussels, and Madrid, were all successful. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is thriving with over 100 pupils involved; as well as completing activities in community service, sport and fitness, the expeditions to Arran and Scotland are both challenging and popular; there was a Religious Studies trip to Iona for pupils who are studying either Philosophy and Ethics at A level or Religious Studies at GCSE; there was an art trip to Prague, skiing in Alpe D'Huez, an ice-climbing trip to Switzerland, a Classics trip to Rome, a Geography/Geology trip to Iceland and an expedition to Peru (including Machu Pichu) for a small number of pupils, parents, and staff.

5.3 The academic year concluded with Speech Day where the Guest of Honour was Sir Digby Jones of the CBI, whose enthusiasm and passion for Britain's role in the 21st Century were most memorable. On the final day the Headmaster's Leavers' Ball was preceded by a Graduation Service in the Chapel attended by pupils, their parents, and staff.

5.4 The most successful sport was cricket with the 1st XI, U15, and U14 winning the majority of their fixtures, while the U13 won the Kent Cup. The 1st XI also enjoyed a most successful tour to Grenada and St Lucia, winning most matches and presenting three bags of cricket gear to members of the opposing sides in Grenada as a gesture of support following the hurricane that devastated the island after our previous tour. While the senior rugby sides found themselves out-gunned by large opposition, the younger teams were more successful with the U15 recovering from the previous year's doldrums to achieve considerable success; similarly hockey continues to grow with the U15 again being the most impressive side.

5.5 In December, we organised a second reunion for Former Pupils. As had been organized in the previous year, before lunch and an afternoon rugby match between younger and more athletic old pupils, a service was held in the Chapel and featured Old Elthamians who had been members of the Armed Forces. Memories from landings in Italy in the Second World War to those of the Captain of HMS Sheffield in the Falklands conflict proved most stimulating and the experiences of the former pupils gave many of the present pupils much to think about and to be thankful for as we enjoy the comparative peace of our current times.

Schools related to the United Reformed Church

6. Silcoates School

6.1 The three schools of the Foundation flourish, with numbers at Silcoates itself reaching 750 and with St Hilda's School continuing to expand. It has been another characteristically busy year, with the addition of our six-yearly ISI inspection in October, after which we were very pleased to receive extremely complimentary reports on the Senior and Junior Schools at Silcoates.

6.2 Two members of the Governing Body, Dr Peter Clarke and Mr Robert Hanson, have completed twenty-five years on the Board. We are fortunate in the diversity and dedication of our Governors, who include several nominated by the United Reformed Church and one nominated by the Congregational Federation.

6.3 The Chaplain, the Revd Tony Jones, has always sought ways of improving the Chapel as a building to be specially cherished. In recent years the organ has been completely overhauled, a vestry has been added, the sound system has been replaced and various artefacts – restrained in style and of high quality – have been added. The Chapel has lately been redecorated and equipped with new heating and lighting. A fine cross, made by a member of the staff, now dominates the east end.

6.4 Every year a number of Old Silcoatiens return to their alma mater to be married in the Chapel. We are delighted that they should choose to come back here for this very important personal occasion. As the Chapel is connected to the Hall, a suitable venue for the reception, Yorkshire weather is one thing that the organisers do not need to worry about.

6.5 Despite being a day school, we maintain a pattern of regular Chapel services over and above the programme of weekday morning worship. The Chapel choir goes from strength to strength: indeed, additional choir stalls were constructed by a member of staff who made the cross. The choir makes a very important contribution to the worship and explores an increasingly adventurous repertoire. It also sings at weddings and baptisms in the Chapel, and elsewhere from time to time, at services in neighbouring United Reformed Churches and in Wakefield Cathedral.

6.6 We retain strong links with Wakefield Cathedral. Over thirty years ago, Jonathan Bielby, the long-serving Master of the Music, briefly combined his Cathedral duties with the directorship of Music at Silcoates. Last year's Head Boy and Head Girl were, coincidentally, both Cathedral choristers, Charlotte Johnson singing a solo at the Royal Maundy Service. Two of our Junior School boys and a Senior School girl are presently members of the boys' and girls' choirs respectively. The Headmaster is a Trustee of the Wakefield Cathedral Music Trust and the Cathedral uses our facilities for social events.

7. Taunton School

7.1 In 2006, Taunton School began its preparations for offering the International Baccalaureate. They have triggered development and renovation of the school's academic facilities, principally its science department. It also intends to provide courses in Mandarin for pupils from the Prep School and up into the Sixth Form from September 2007.

7.2 These initiatives are part of the School's ongoing mission to prepare young people to shape the world in the twenty first century. With 70% of A level grades at A and B in summer 2006, confidence is high.

7.3 Spring Term 2007 also sees the celebrations of the chapel centenary. Present and past friends of Taunton School have been invited to concerts and services to mark this special event.

7.4 After a successful ISI and CSCI inspection in October 2005 and November 2006 respectively, Taunton School continues to be proud of the quality of the service it offers and the benefit it brings to young people.

8. **Walthamstow Hall**

8.1 2005-2006 proved to be another successful year at Walthamstow Hall.

8.2 In Summer 2005, important preparatory work was completed when our infrastructure services were replaced or upgraded. This meant that we invested over £400,000 in putting in new water, gas, and electricity services at our Senior School site. These were to enable us to proceed with the next phases of the School's building programme, the building of a new 25m indoor pool.

8.3 In January 2006 the extent of the Mulberry Development was unveiled to parents. The full project over the next five years will provide brand new sports facilities and include the complete refurbishment of the Assembly Hall Block to create a second, larger performance space to complement the existing Ship Theatre. The development will also provide a new suite of teaching rooms for the Mathematics Department to accommodate additional pupil numbers.

8.4 Later in the year at our Senior School Prize Giving, we were privileged to be joined by Dr Beverley Hunt, an old girl, who as well as being a leading expert in Haematology at Guy's and St Thomas's Hospital, is also the founder of the Charity *Lifeblood* and a triathlete. Dr Hunt gave an inspiring talk to the school.

8.5 Last summer academic examination results broke records again, with 77% of A2 candidates achieving grades A and B. At GCSE we were proud of our candidates who passed their examinations with an impressive 74% of grades at A and A*. Whatever the media might say, this represents a good deal of hard work by staff and girls.

8.6 Girls here, however, are not simply focussed on their own success and future, they also give their time and talents generously to help others and raise money for local, national, and international charities. Over the past year, we have been raising money in particular for a local children's hospice and supporting Rockdale House nursing home in Sevenoaks (founded and managed by old girls).

8.7 All that makes up a rounded education continues to flourish, with girls working closely with Tonbridge School in both musical and dramatic performances.

8.8 We look forward to the new year mindful of the words of George Herbert: 'O Thou who has given us so much, mercifully grant us one thing more – a grateful heart'.

9. **Wentworth College**

9.1 Last summer the forty-four girls in Y11 entered for a total of 405 GCSEs in twenty-two subjects, an average of 9.2 subjects per candidate. Each of our students gained an average of 57 points – a new record for us with each subject entry over 61 points, which is equivalent to a grade B. We found ourselves at the top of the Bournemouth Value-Added league table last year.

9.2 The students in Y13 completed final AS/A2 modules in twenty subjects. We were delighted with their results as the overall pass rate was 100%. One student gained five full A levels, two at grade A. The records show that our students have improved on the high standard set in past years and I am pleased to be reporting to you our rising trend of success.

9.3 As usual our girls have devoted much time to charitable activities. The sixth form alone raised over £1,100 in support of Barnados and BBC Children In Need appeals. One member of Y12 produced, planned, photographed, published, and promoted a school calendar, which raised £550 for Cancer Research UK. We collected shoeboxes for Love in a Shoebox Appeal organised by Mustard Seed Relief Missions. Task force, our project working with the children from Victoria School is now in its eleventh year.

Schools related to the United Reformed Church

9.4 The PE department have worked hard to increase the number of fixtures in all sports. One of our badminton players is now training with the England squad at the National Badminton Centre, Milton Keynes, and one of our Y12 trampolinists has completed at National Grade 2 level and is also a coach and Dorset Representative on the South West Organising Committee.

9.5 Drama has played a large part of school life with a production each term including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Grease*, and a *Bad Dream* – a murder mystery.

9.6 As always, the past year has been full of musical events, with Songs from the Shows, an informal junior concert, the Spring Concert, performance for Richmond Hill St Andrew's United Reformed Church Literary and Musical Society, creative arts evening, carols and mulled wine, and the annual Advent service.

9.7 The year ended with a team of 'cablers' installing our new infrastructure, as we are currently upgrading the ICT provision in the school. The complete refit of ICT equipment included ninety-five new desktop computers, two laptop trolleys, each with twelve laptops, and three interactive whiteboards placed strategically around the school. This refit should provide us with the latest information technology equipment currently available on the market.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. G. Smith'.

